

**Narratives of Military Moral Injury and Reintegration:
Toward a Critical, Liberative Practical Theology**

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Abstract

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This dissertation in practical theological reflection excavates and critiques our societal responses to military moral injury. Military moral injury is a relatively recent addition to the psychospiritual trauma domain, and it derives from decisions or actions made in combat that betray a person's understanding of the differences between right and wrong. When such experiences, defined as morally injurious events (MIEs), are left unaddressed and untreated, they can become a moral injury. Current military moral injury research falls into two strands: one strand focuses on moral injuries arising at the individual level and another strand focuses on those events arising at the military organizational level. There are myriad issues that are uncovered when one examines how individuals who have experienced MIEs are "reintegrated" into civilian life, especially in a reserve military context. Some of these issues guide this dissertation, such as how the reintegration experience is unique for reservists; how the spatial and temporal proximity of reservists to civilians impacts the reintegration of a reservist who has experienced an MIE; and what the relationship between a reservist and family and friends is like post-deployment.

Within the moral injury definition, however, there is not a critique in place to examine how dominant ideologies function to exacerbate the reintegration struggles of a person with an existing moral injury. Ideology, as a set of ideas through which people structure their existence and rationalize inconsistencies within their worldviews, is seldom critiqued. I argue that moral injury reintegration is further complicated within a cultural ecosystem steeped in an ideology that

places significance on and mythologizes military service members. My primary cognate conversation partner, British cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall, provides a post-Marxist analysis of the effects of ideology on society. This dissertation moves away from a reductive view of ideology as a false consciousness, found in Karl Marx, and offers an “oppositional” way to resist dominant ideologies encoded in mass media texts and therefore inscribed on veterans’ MIEs. Hall, then, assists with critiquing how dominant ideologies can be a contributing factor in moral injury reintegration.

The framework I propose is an interdisciplinary practical theology. First, using British cultural studies, the entire framework is understood from the perspective offered by Antonio Gramsci of a struggle toward counterhegemony. Within that framework, military chaplains are uniquely positioned to provide effective leadership against a dominant ideology’s amplification of an existing moral injury. A liberative God, co-suffering with the veteran, undergirds that framework.

Methodologically, this dissertation is supported by an instrumental case study that excavates one Reserve component veteran’s experience reintegrating an MIE. Utilizing case study offers an opportunity for a thick description of the lived experience of moral injury. Further, methods from the liberative praxis of practical and pastoral theology bolster this dissertation’s privileging of those outside dominant ideologies. Narrative therapy provides methods for the functions for spiritual care and a pathway to solidarity. Using narrative therapy allows for a privileging of the veterans’ stories. Opposition is possible; resistance is possible; peace is possible.

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It's taken me 50,000 separate wrecks to get here. . .

— Norma Jean, “Disconnectie: The Faithful Vampire”

How can I begin to condense the experience of this dissertation—and the PhD program overall? This journey began in 2013 and quickly entailed a combat deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. I was apprehensive to inform my new Practical Theology, Spiritual Care, and Counseling faculty of my deployment. However, Duane Bidwell, Kathleen Greider, and K. Samuel Lee supported me wholeheartedly. They also creatively worked alongside me to cocreate an alternative clinical placement in which I could study and not lose time while deployed. Therefore, every two weeks (depending on Wi-Fi accessibility), Duane and I met over Skype to discuss spiritual care goals, case vignettes, and my evolving pastoral identity.

When I returned home in December 2014, my wife and I soon learned we were pregnant with our son, Isaac. Isaac was born at twenty-eight weeks gestational age and spent his first fifty-seven days of life in a NICU. I was not only reintegrating a deployment but also now figuring out how to integrate this new trauma. Once Isaac came home, it was time to complete coursework. After coursework, our journey took us back to family and friends in Kansas City, Missouri.

Throughout this journey I am grateful for such a “great cloud of witnesses,” many of whom I cannot name directly. However, this dissertation would not have been possible without the following people.

I am deeply grateful to my dissertation committee members—Duane Bidwell, Kathleen

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To the soldiers and family members of the 315th Engineer Battalion, I trust that this work honors our service. Serving as your chaplain was one of the most humbling experiences of my life. May “goodness and mercy follow you all the days of your life.” *Fabricamos!*

To my family and friends, whether in Claremont, Pasadena, Long Beach, or Kansas City: thank you for listening, loving, and accompanying me to this point.

To my beloved Isaac and Annette: you are profoundly loved and known. Live into the joy that you both exude. Finally, to Beth: this is our journey. This is our sacrifice. Thank you. My love for you only deepens and becomes more steadfast the longer we journey.

¹ Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative*, trans. Arnold Pomerans (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), 256.

Abbreviations

AD	adaptive disclosure
AD-E	adaptive disclosure-enhanced
BSS	building spiritual strength
CBT	cognitive behavioral therapy
CCCS	The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), University of Birmingham
CH	army chaplain
ECP	entry control point
FSC	forward support company
HHC	headquarters, headquarters company
IED	improvised explosive device
ISA	“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” 1971
MIE	morally injurious event
PE	prolonged exposure
PTSD	posttraumatic stress disorder
SPC	specialist
VA	US Department of Veterans Affairs

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, over half of those who have fought come from the Reserves and National Guard, which means they return, not to military bases or large cities, but to their civilian communities where there may be few, if any, fellow veterans. . . Bereft of their units and lacking other veterans who might understand their experiences of war, they struggle to rebuild their lives in isolation as aliens to the world that was once their own. In their communities, family or friends who want to understand and listen can mean the difference between a life restored and a life lost.¹

— Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini

One challenge of being a “citizen-soldier” (military parlance for a Reserve member of the military service) returning to civilian life from overseas combat is fully reintegrating into a society uninterested (or at least unwilling to acknowledge) the full psychospiritual impact of war. This is further complicated when that experience includes moral injury, or what this dissertation will classify as a morally injurious event (MIE). My thesis is that, at a societal level, civilians can exacerbate MIEs and re-traumatize returning Reserve and National Guard veterans through our collective inability to reckon with and process society’s role in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Discussion of the Problem

This societal exacerbation can be as innocuous as the transactional statement, “Thank you for your service,” said when encountering a veteran at the airport, or it can be as extreme as the ideological use of veterans as political pawns to further one’s position in national debates.² The 2017-2018 controversy over NFL players choosing to kneel during the national anthem in protest against the brutality of American police forces on black and brown communities highlights this

¹ Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 90.

² Joshua T. Morris, “‘Thank You for Your Service’: Mapping Counter-Memories as a Form of Spiritual Care Support for Moral Injury,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 28, no. 1 (2018): 34-44.

ideological extreme. Beginning in 2016 with former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's protest, the kneeling was decoded as disrespectful to service members who "died for the flag." This ideological logic suggests that because veterans died for this country, you *must* stand during the national anthem. The obliviousness of this ideology is seldom taken into account; for example, those who oppose kneeling rarely consider that individuals who "died for the flag" were not afforded adequate access to US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health benefits. Arguing that these NFL players were *not* protesting military service members and that the players have been clear in what they are protesting is ineffective because the argument takes place within ideology, and as Stuart Hall reminds us, ideology is "always contradictory. . . . Ideology works best by suturing lines of argument and emotional investments."³ Although this example does not deal directly with moral injury, it illustrates how parameters of discourse for discussing veterans can affect how returning soldiers are received. When ideology sets the discourse for how a veteran is received, a certain *type* of veteran is accepted.

Further, the dominant ideology of mythologizing the military service member maintains a fantasy that any conflict in which the United States is engaged *is* moral. The service members, therefore, who fight these moral wars, are reduced to being veterans who are either "heroes" or "head cases."⁴ One dominant ideological narrative of American military service, as pastoral theologian and military chaplain Zachary Moon posits it, "honors military service on a superficial level and cannot easily accommodate evidence of PTSD, moral injury, and veteran

³ Stuart Hall, "The Neoliberal Revolution," in *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and Other Essays*, ed. Sally Davison, David Featherstone, Michael Rustin, and Bill Schwarz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 326.

⁴ Zachary Moon, "Turn Now, My Vindication is at Stake: Military Moral Injury and Communities of Faith," *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 1 (February 2019): 94; "(Re)Turning Warriors: A Practical Theology of Military Moral Stress" (PhD diss., Iliff School of Theology, University of Denver, 2016), 86, <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1149>.

suicide because these phenomena seem to diminish the stoic warrior image.”⁵ This “stoic” image upholds the hero narrative. On the one hand, the veteran is a hero who served his or her country with distinction, and the only acceptable relationship to the veteran is one of reverence; on the other hand, as a head case, the veteran is one more broken, substance abusing, suicidal vet. This binary creates a gap or tension for individuals who have experienced MIEs and are not comfortable seeing themselves as “heroes” or “head cases.” Merely reifying a veteran as either a hero or a head case is not tenable as it does not interrogate the conditions of possibility that *created* the situation, and it will only continue the current ideological system.

Therefore, in this dissertation, I argue that without critiquing the dominant ideological system that continues to subject men and women to brutal combat rotations, ever-growing suicide rates, and the traumatic experiences of MIEs, society will continue to only see veterans as objects. Speaking to the necessity of this critique, research shows that the ways in which veterans remember their combat deployment and are able to resolve self-judgment are related to rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.⁶

Current moral injury research falls into two strands: one strand focuses on moral injury originating at the individual level and the other strand on moral injury originating at the military organizational level.⁷ In terms of the first strand, clinician-researchers Brett Litz, William Nash, and Shira Maguen emphasize the subjective experience of moral injury that occurs when an individual’s personal moral code of “what’s right” is violated in a high-stakes environment. Litz and colleagues define these experiences as “morally injurious events such as the perpetrating,

⁵ Moon, “(Re)Turning Warriors,” 86.

⁶ Craig J. Bryan et al., “Guilt as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Depression and Posttraumatic Stress with Suicide Ideation in Two Samples of Military Personnel and Veterans,” *International Journal of Cognitive Therapy* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 153.

⁷ Lindsay B. Carey et al., “Moral Injury, Spiritual Care and the Role of Chaplains: An Exploratory Scoping Review of Literature and Resources,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 4 (2016): 1220.

failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”⁸ These “deeply” held moral beliefs are “personal and shared familial, cultural, societal, and legal rules for social behavior, either tacit or explicit. Morals are fundamental assumptions about how things should work and how one should behave in the world.”⁹

The organizational level is addressed in the work of former Veterans Affairs (VA) psychiatrist Jonathan Shay. Shay focuses on a betrayal of “what’s right” by a significant authority figure in a leadership position, which is not so much an individual moral injury, but a moral injury produced through incompetent (or failed) leadership. For example, Shay opens his groundbreaking text, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, with a vignette of American service members in Vietnam.¹⁰ After firing upon three boats that American forces suspected were used to transport weapons, the service members realized that fishermen and children occupied the boats. The “confusion” set in for the service members when leadership told them, “It is fine,” and “Don’t worry about it.”¹¹ The commanding officer told them it was “fine,” that leadership would “take care of it,” to which one service member responded, “So you know in your heart it’s wrong, but at the time, here’s your superior telling you that it was okay.”¹²

The two strands of moral injury research are not mutually exclusive but interdependent, as they coexist. One strand can lead into the other. An MIE that starts in the organizational context can easily coalesce into an individual MIE as a soldier fails to do “what’s right” after key leadership individuals have failed to uphold “what’s right.”

⁸ Brett T. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 29, no. 8 (2009): 697.

⁹ Litz et al., “Moral Injury,” 699, quoted in Warren Kinghorn, “Combat Trauma and Moral Fragmentation: A Theological Account of Moral Injury,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 32, no. 2 (2012): 60-61.

¹⁰ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Scribner, 1994).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*

To a degree, these concepts are helpful in differentiating moral injury from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, something is missed in typologies that isolate the event in either the individual or the organizational construct of the military. A focus on individual pathology does not critique the broader social and cultural implications of reintegrating with the experience of MIEs, which would call into question current foreign policy and the ideological (mis)use of military service for political and social purposes. As caregivers, military chaplains need to be able to conceptualize the ideological apparatuses at work in MIEs in order to find a way through their matrices to cocreate meaning and move toward healing. Otherwise, as suggested by pastoral theologian Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, caregivers must “pause to ponder their place and designated function in the larger society in which they practice. Unless we do this, however, we are condemned to become chaplains to the status quo and particularly on behalf of any hegemony that happens to be in power.”¹³ Further, as Uruguayan Jesuit priest Juan Luis Segundo, one of the founders of Latin American liberation theology, reminds us, “We must understand and appreciate the ideological mechanisms of established society if theology is to take the word of God and convert it from a vague outline to a clearly worked out message. Otherwise theology will become and remain the unwitting spokesman of the experiences and ideas of the ruling factions and classes.”¹⁴

Beyond the battlefield, chaplains seeking to reintegrate veterans into civil society need a clearer conceptualization of cultural ideologies that can amplify an existing moral injury. Therefore, in this dissertation I examine how American society’s ideological mythologizing of military service functions and how it affects the reintegrating citizen-soldiers who have

¹³ Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, “Best Practices in Pastoral Counseling: Is Theology Necessary?” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 23, no. 1 (2013): 4.

¹⁴ Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, trans. John Drury (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 39.

experienced moral injury by using a qualitative case study methodology in conjunction with methods found within a liberative praxis approach to practical and pastoral theology and with the pastoral counseling practices of narrative therapy.

In conceptualizing moral injury, I seek to add my own nuance, which is that reintegrating with a moral injury is further complicated within a cultural ecosystem steeped in an ideology of the significance and mythologizing of military service members. Thus, my focus is to provide an ideological and societal critique of how people with military moral injuries are viewed and treated. I assert that to properly reintegrate Reserve and National Guard veterans into society, two steps are necessary: First, veterans need a space in which to fully articulate and “re-author” their experiences of MIEs.¹⁵ Second, military chaplains (primarily) and practical and pastoral theologians (secondarily) must critique the dominant ideologies of American military service to cocreate counterhegemonic spaces of proper reintegration. A cocreated space is one of solidarity, as military chaplains position themselves as Gramscian “intellectuals.” Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci argued that for a counterhegemonic group to win hegemony, “organic intellectuals” from the same social class are needed to organize and lead from within that class (more on this in chapters 2 and 6).¹⁶ Military chaplains can fulfill such an intellectual role. If ideological critique of the reintegration of veterans with moral injuries is not properly utilized, veterans will continue to receive the hollow platitude of “thank you for your service,” while nothing will change at a cultural level. At worst, the United States’ service members will continue to die in the wars that have become our longest, and the wars will continue to wreak havoc on generations of families in Iraq and Afghanistan.

¹⁵ Michael White, *Maps of Narrative Practice* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 61. In my definitions section I will explain the Reserve component of the military more thoroughly.

¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 2014), 5-23.

Discussion of the Thesis

Theologian Joseph McDonald posits that the level of personal agency is what differentiates the two types of moral injury.¹⁷ This is a helpful analysis, and it assists in conceptualizing the phenomenon of moral injury. However, emphasizing agency as the site of moral injury research is problematic for two key reasons. First, it falls into an objective, pathologizing medical worldview that privileges diagnosis. Diagnosis establishes a hierarchy of “objective” truth in which, in a traditional counseling scenario, power resides with the therapist or other professional providing the diagnosis. This has had success, of course, but it does not contribute to long-term reintegration because it fails to reintegrate the veteran back into a society that is not prepared, ideologically, to conceptualize moral injury. In other words, the veteran has done “the work,” in therapy, but the society is not prepared to reintegrate the veteran back into it.

Anecdotally, some veterans who come to see me for pastoral counseling in my role as an army chaplain are reticent to go to the VA in fear of the aforementioned stigma of being considered a “head case.” Some research supports this anecdote, as there is a reported inverse relationship between rates of self-reporting behavioral and mental health concerns and rates of accessing treatment facilities.¹⁸ Admitting a psychological need can still be perceived as a symptom of failure or a sign of weakness. The accompanying guilt, which is a primary symptom of moral injury, “often prevents many veterans from seeking social and spiritual support. Without such support, veterans will remain stuck in guilt, and less able to co-create more complex meanings about morally injurious events.”¹⁹ These individuals, then, fall through the

¹⁷ Joseph McDonald, introduction to *Exploring Moral Injury in Sacred Texts*, ed. Joseph McDonald (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017), 14.

¹⁸ Roseanne Visco, “Postdeployment, Self-Reporting of Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care,” *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care; Madison* 45, no. 4 (October 2009): 247.

¹⁹ Carrie Doebling, “Military Moral Injury: An Evidence-Based and Intercultural Approach to Spiritual Care,” *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 1 (February 2019): 16.

cracks; in avoiding the perception of failure, they do not access resources that could benefit their reintegration.

Inherently, the issue becomes one of the ideology of the military as a system that upholds “duty,” “selfless service,” and “honor,” which can seem untenable with self-reporting a behavioral or mental concern. It is not merely an issue of self-reporting, as Roseanne Visco unpacks in her research with active duty Air Force airmen: airmen were more likely to self-report physical symptoms than behavioral and mental symptoms.²⁰ The ideological malaise surrounding behavioral and mental health symptoms is precisely why military chaplains need to be able to decipher the ideological matrices; military chaplains represent a more “socially accepted source of help” than “traditional mental health providers.”²¹ Within the military, chaplains are trusted in part because they are present in the lives of their service members, living on the “front line with regard to MI [moral injury] counseling.”²² Chaplains are *where* the soldiers are; they *live* as the soldiers live; and they *suffer* as the soldiers suffer. Chaplains in many different contexts understand this as a ministry of presence.

Winnifred Fallers Sullivan describes the multivalence of a ministry of presence as follows: “In some contexts for some people, presence can be reassuringly immanent and down to earth, empty of formal doctrinal content, comfortingly abstracted from tradition, but in and for others, it can specifically evoke highly elaborated theological understandings and rituals.”²³ Another critical reason why military chaplains are, perhaps, preferable to more traditional behavioral health counselors is the absolute confidentiality a chaplain offers. A service member

²⁰ Visco, “Postdeployment,” 241.

²¹ J. Irene Harris, et al., “Moral Injury and Psycho-Spiritual Development: Considering the Developmental Context,” *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 2 (January 1, 2015): 257.

²² Carey et al., “Moral Injury,” 1230.

²³ Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care, and the Law* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 174.

knows that when he or she visits a chaplain “there is no appointment officially recorded . . . that would otherwise show up on medical documents or other records.”²⁴

Second, focusing on agency fails to account for the societal implications of MIEs. More specifically, focusing on agency fails to take into consideration how American military service functions as an ideology in ways that can exacerbate the reintegration struggles of veterans with moral injury. Caregivers need to embrace both a spiritual care paradigm that emphasizes a communal response while also critiquing how ideology functions in society. As pastoral theologians have emphasized since Bonnie Miller-McLemore’s 1993 article on the “living human web,” the caregiving relationship includes a broader social and political consciousness of how webs of interdependence impact persons.²⁵

With her concept of the living human web, Miller-McLemore voiced concerns with Anton Boisen’s method of studying the “living human document.”²⁶ Boisen’s living human document method posited that the same rigor that went into studying biblical texts or literary texts could be applied to individuals in a caregiving relationship. However, Miller-McLemore’s primary conversation partners of liberation theologies and feminism elucidated how systems contribute to domination and oppression. To take seriously the concerns of marginalized communities, spiritual care and counseling needed imagery that spoke to those concerns. Miller-McLemore’s shift, then, was to move away from a narrowly defined understanding of counseling to a broader, more inclusive focus on the contextual aspects of care. Her conceptual contribution to the field of pastoral theology focused on the embeddedness of persons in various public webs of meaning.

²⁴ Carey et al., “Moral Injury,” 1230.

²⁵ Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “The Human Web: Reflections on the State of Pastoral Theology,” *Christian Century* 110, no. 11 (April 7, 1993): 366-369.

²⁶ Anton T. Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936), 10.

Miller-McLemore is not advocating the complete erasure of the living human document as an image by which to understand care; rather, she has a broader conceptualization of care that takes the holistic approach of taking into account the multifaceted systemic realities at play. “Ultimately,” she says, “I suggest that ‘the living human document within the web’ is the metaphor that best captures the subject matter of both CPE and pastoral theology.”²⁷ This is a helpful quote as it names the places where Miller-McLemore joins with Boisen and also where they depart from one another. Both emphasize that the caregiver needs to understand the world of the caregiver and the care receiver. With this trajectory of pastoral theology behind and surrounding me, I contend that focusing on individual agency without considering societal responsibility will not lead to a holistic reintegration for veterans *or* society.

Pastoral theologian Ryan LaMothe has effectively argued that the American hegemonic narrative of “superiority, exceptionalism, and innocence” has successfully obfuscated an ability to grieve properly, and I would add to this that this narrative shapes how we mythologize our veterans.²⁸ Dominant ideologies impact the ways in which we receive veterans and the ways in which we understand combat trauma—and even military service broadly speaking.

I advocate for developing a clearer theoretical conceptualization of cultural ideologies that can amplify an existing moral injury. In developing this conceptualization, I turn to several theological, philosophical, and psychological resources. I meld the communal-contextual spiritual care paradigm with the liberative spiritual care practice of solidarity. I understand solidarity as pastoral theologian Sharon Thornton articulates it:

Sustaining now becomes a pastoral practice of nonabandonment through solidarity. It becomes a way of sharing life with those who are enduring historical

²⁷ Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 51.

²⁸ Ryan LaMothe, “Empire, Systemic Violence, and the Refusal to Mourn: A Pastoral Political Perspective,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 23, no. 2 (2013): 2.

wounds. Sustaining as solidarity means being willing to stay beside people in their struggle to be free from unnecessary suffering, being willing to fight with them and not necessarily for them for their release. The meaning of sustaining as solidarity becomes the first movement of a pastoral theology whose aim is love. Solidarity is the primary action of pastoral care in a movement that hopes for healing.²⁹

In this dissertation, I seek to develop this approach to solidarity. I offer an ecclesiology that will support the reintegration of veterans by drawing from an analysis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*; narrative therapeutic practices from Michael White, David Epston, and others; and insights from ideology critique developed by British cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall (while adopting Gramsci's counterhegemonic proposals).

Review of Closely Related Literature

In chapter two I will provide a thorough literature review, so here I will briefly note the primary trajectories and threads from the aforementioned conversation partners that will enhance this dissertation. First, as this is a dissertation on moral injury, I review the first generation of moral injury research, tracing its development from Jonathan Shay through the handful of pastoral theologians addressing the phenomenon of moral injury. The other important strand to unpack is ideology critique, in particular my primary cognate conversation partners of cultural studies and critical theory, which includes a post-Marxist ideology critique from Hall.

Moral Injury

As the literature on moral injury is still in its first generation, most of the research is descriptive in nature. Therefore, much of early moral injury research has consisted of differentiating the phenomenon from PTSD. With PTSD only entering the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) as a diagnosis in 1980, the prevalence of not only

²⁹ Sharon G. Thornton, *Broken Yet Beloved: A Pastoral Theology of the Cross* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 123.

moral injury research but also PTSD research is somewhat recent. However, this makes it sound as though there has been a clear demarcation between the diagnosis of PTSD and of moral injury, and this is not the case. Jonathan Shay's work with Vietnam veterans is considered the first to differentiate the stressors that lead to moral injury from PTSD criterion.

Shay's work with Vietnam veterans decisively found that for an MIE to occur, three things all need to happen: (1) there has to be a betrayal of what is morally right, (2) by someone who holds legitimate authority, and (3) in a high-stakes situation.³⁰ As I mentioned above, in 2009, Litz and his colleagues isolated the MIE in the subjective experience of individual veterans. They understood morally injurious events to include "the perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations."³¹ In the time between Shay's description of the phenomenon of moral injury in 1994 to Litz and his colleague's transitional definition in 2009, not much changed. Even after 2009, the literature continued to build primarily on these two psychological definitions.

Within theological studies broadly, moral injury first gained attention through Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini's *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*.³² In addition to cowriting this text, Brock was the first codirector of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, in Fort Worth, Texas. Brock and her team of veterans and chaplains have traveled the United States providing seminars and workshops to people interested in moral injury.

Ideology Critique

³⁰ Jonathan Shay, "Moral Injury," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 31, no. 2 (2014): 183.

³¹ Litz et al., "Moral Injury," 697.

³² Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

I am turning to cultural studies and ideology critique to correct the psychological focus on individual suffering and pathology that dominates the literature of moral injury. Although the burgeoning literature of moral injury, for the most part originated in the field of psychology, it cannot remain there. As psychiatrist and professor of moral theology Warren Kinghorn notes, moral injury research “beckons beyond itself to a thicker contextual account of proper human ends than modern scientific psychology”; structurally, Kinghorn offers a “moral theology, embodied in specific communities with specific contextually formed practices.”³³ Ideology critique offers assistance with creating the “thicker contextual account,” and the communal practices I advocate enacting are discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

Therefore, although chapter 2 unpacks the technical understanding of ideology that originated with Karl Marx and was expanded upon by Hall, I want to provide here this dissertation’s working definition of ideology. An *ideology* is the set of ideas by which people structure their existence and rationalize inconsistencies within their worldviews. An ideology is, therefore, any set of beliefs that determines social behavior. Building on this concept, ideology critique traditionally sought to point out the inconsistencies of beliefs in the system and to show people (or “unmask” to them) that their ideological beliefs do not reflect reality as it “really” is. The goal, in Marx’s understanding of ideology critique, is to get people away from their ideological beliefs and into an un-ideological reality.

For this dissertation, I want to utilize the work of Stuart Hall, the second director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham from 1968-1979. It is Hall’s ability to synthesize, critique, and move past his conversation partners that I contend makes his theorizing of ideology more complete than others. His theorizing on ideology is more complete via his understanding of the media *as* ideological. For Hall, the world is

³³ Kinghorn, “Combat Trauma,” 59.

saturated with media, and importantly, humanity understands and produces meaning through media.

Hall rejects the binary distinction between high culture and popular culture, and he consistently notes that politics resides at the level of popular culture. For these reasons, Hall was just as comfortable exegeting British soap operas, mining them for meaning, as he was explicating Marx or Gramsci. As Hall himself stated, “Indeed, if we put the emphasis on the mass or multiple production of cultural goods, we must include all books, newspapers, gramophone records, etc., Tolstoy as well as Spillane, *The Times* as well as the *Daily Mirror*, Beethoven as well as the Beatles.”³⁴

The media, those artifacts of popular culture, are crucial for Hall’s work because they become instantiations for how people understand themselves. In other words, meaning is produced in popular culture, and this production is inscribed onto media products. For this dissertation, I will specifically dissect films and various cable news representations of veteran news stories as they relate my research participant’s experiences. Returning to Hall, ideology is not a false consciousness, but rather, socially constructed. There is no “one to one relationship between the conditions of social existence we are living and how we experience them.”³⁵ Ideology has an existing logic to it that creates and limits social and metaphysical understandings of how the world works. Also, there is no *outside* of ideology. For Hall, “it is not possible to bring ideology to an end and simply live the real.”³⁶ That idea itself is, simply, pure ideology. All that can be done is to choose how to function within ideologies. Life is about *which* ideological frameworks we engage, rather than how to escape them.

³⁴ Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 35.

³⁵ Stuart Hall, “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communications* 2 (1985): 105.

³⁶ Stuart Hall, “Ideology and Ideological Struggle,” in *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 138.

Methodology and Methods

Just as I briefly outlined the closely related literature above, I will summarize my methodology here before providing a complete discussion of my methodology and methods of care in chapter 3. At this point, I want to note the methodological goal of this practical theology dissertation. The goal is twofold. First, I seek to identify how, through dominant ideologies, society has failed to reintegrate returning Reserve and National Guard veterans. Second, I seek to provide an account of how Reserve and National Guard veterans can privilege their MIEs as sources of authority and wisdom in talking to others about war and reintegration, without positioning themselves as either “heroes” or “head cases.” There are three methods that guide my approach: (1) a practical theological hermeneutical method of liberative praxis (supported by a revised praxis method of correlation), (2) the qualitative methodology of case study, and (3) the cultural studies approach of ideology critique.

The qualitative inquiry method for this study is case study research. An instrumental approach to case study research is essential for my dissertation as it provides the opportunity to reflect on the essence of MIEs experienced by Reserve component members of the military. Implicit in the instrumental strand of case study is utilizing a particular case to study something else—something broader. Therefore, in this case study, I am using the specific example of Reserve component veterans to consider the broader experience of reintegration with a moral injury.

What is it like to return home after combat? This is a question for all returning service members, but there are unique circumstances informing the Reserve or National Guard perspective that need investigating. It is unique, for example, that Reserve component service members can possibly return to their civilian work setting or educational setting only weeks after

participating in an overseas combat deployment. Once these individuals “redeploy” to the United States, there is a set amount of time during which service members are evaluated and screened for potential traumatic exposure or other physical, mental, and emotional ailments. However, most service members will report whatever is deemed necessary to get home and potentially fail to disclose an MIE, therefore missing the opportunity to arrange follow-up counseling. Once these service members get home, behavioral health resources are not as readily available for them. This could simply be an issue of proximity, as their home could be miles away from not only a military installation—or a VA center—but also miles away from a community that understands military service. This community does not necessarily need to be made up of veterans, but the community needs to have familiarity with veteran support.

Ultimately, case study assists in learning about the reintegration experience of a person with an MIE from the Reserve component. For my case study, I interviewed a Reserve combat veteran, Army Reserve Specialist (SPC) Phillip Campbell.³⁷ Phillip is in his late forties. He is a heterosexual, white, and cisgender male. He is the father of two adult children (ages 24 and 22) and has a two-year-old granddaughter. SPC Phillip and his wife Vicki have been married for eleven years, including a four-month separation after his deployment to Afghanistan in early 2013. My research design criteria stated that my participant needed to be a Reserve or National Guard component veteran who was 18 or older and had experienced MIEs while deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and/or to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). I recruited my participant by reaching out to gatekeepers in the Kansas City veteran community.

³⁷ All names have been changed to protect privacy. My participant was given the option to pick a name he would like, have the principal investigator pick a name, or decide to use his or her own name. My participant allowed me, as the principal investigator, to pick a name.

The interviews took place over a six-week period during the summer of 2018. SPC Phillip and I met during the first, third, and fifth weeks of this period in a reserved conference room at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri. This location was safe in that it engendered a sense of anonymity that perhaps would not have been afforded in a space at the VA. Having the interviews spaced apart in this way enabled me to gather data that was co-constructed with Phillip by giving him multiple opportunities to provide feedback. Weeks two and four consisted of analyzing the initial interviews in preparation for subsequent interviews. This approach was consistent with my commitment to both liberative praxis methodology and narrative therapy by privileging the voice of the storyteller. I conducted thematic analysis and interpretation of the recorded interviews through NVivo, a qualitative research software program installed on my password-protected personal laptop. I then transcribed and analyzed the interviews within one week of conducting each interview.

The relational emphasis of a case study qualitative inquiry methodology, in conjunction with liberative praxis methods of practical and pastoral theology and pastoral counseling practices of narrative therapy, privileged the agency of Phillip in identifying his level of desired privacy and confidentiality. Phillip had the option to withdraw or to choose to be identified by another name any time prior to submitting the dissertation's final draft. He could review the transcripts of the interviews via these options: (1) read the transcript himself, (2) have it read to him by the principle investigator, or (3) listen to the recorded interview with the principle investigator. This review was an opportunity for Phillip to make corrections and to clarify intended communication. I further discuss this process below as a step toward validity in qualitative research. It was my intention that these methods assist in minimizing the risk of

misrepresentation and shame (which is particularly relevant with moral injury symptomology, outlined in chapter 2), but the risk inherently remains.

My fundamental method of pastoral counseling, narrative therapy, informed the interview process in how I conceptualized not only the questions I asked in my semi-structured interviews, but also in how I conceptualized subjectivity and located unique outcomes. Michael White and David Epston first developed narrative therapy, and pastoral theologians such as Duane Bidwell, Christie Neuger, Karen Scheib, Suzanne Coyle, and Andrew Lester have adopted it. Narrative therapy privileges the storyteller. White and Epston maintained that since an objective view of the world is not possible, people ascribe meaning to their lived experiences through narratives: “Experience must be storied and it is this storying that determines the meaning ascribed to experience.”³⁸ In addition, individual narratives take place within broader, cultural narratives.

Narrative therapy practices emphasize deconstructing (through “externalizing the problem,” not the person) and reconstructing problematic stories (looking for “unique outcomes”) in order to develop and enact a preferred story. In this study, I utilize three practices of narrative therapy: text analogy, externalizing the problem, and re-authoring situations. Anthropologist Edward Bruner’s concept of text analogy influenced White and Epston. Bruner asserted that there are two primary modes of thought: narrative and paradigmatic. In narrative thought, “the mind engages in sequential, action-oriented, detail-driven thought. In paradigmatic thinking, the mind transcends particularities to achieve systematic, categorical cognition.”³⁹ The text analogy approach privileges the lived experience of the individual seeking therapy. In that privileging, the chaplain begins to listen for gaps in the narrative. When individuals retell stories,

³⁸ Michael White and David Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 10.

³⁹ Stephen Madigan, *Narrative Therapy* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2011), 33n3.

there are key events, pieces of information, or individuals who are either not included in the narrative or are remembered differently. As White and Epston note, “Stories are full of gaps which persons must fill in order for the story to be performed.”⁴⁰

Working from the postmodern worldview that objective reality is not knowable, narrative therapists assume that what people know of their lives has come through experience. It is experience that gets interpreted. White and Epston state, “Although a piece of behavior occurs in time in such a way that it no longer exists in the present by the time it is attended to, the meaning that is ascribed to the behavior survives across time.”⁴¹ It is how one tells the stories of one’s life that gives it meaning.

Externalizing is arguably the most important practice in White and Epston’s oeuvre. Externalizing creates a “liminal space” in which individuals can “reflect on their relationship to the problems themselves.”⁴² When externalizing problems, a chaplain is listening for “unique outcomes.” A unique outcome falls outside the main narrative and becomes “a fertile source for the generation, or re-generation, of alternative stories.”⁴³ Therefore, after the problem is externalized and objectified, an individual can identify neglected pieces of the stories (the gaps mentioned above). Re-authoring allows an individual with a “point of entry” to tap into inner resources to do what he or she is already adept at doing: making meaning out of events.⁴⁴

Definitions

In this section I define some of the more technical terms in this dissertation. First, this is a dissertation on military *moral injury*: moral injury consists of decisions or actions made in

⁴⁰ White and Epston, *Narrative Means*, 13.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9.

⁴² Suzanne N. Coyle, *Uncovering Spiritual Narratives: Using Story in Pastoral Care and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 23.

⁴³ White and Epston, *Narrative Means*, 15.

⁴⁴ White, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, 61.

combat (either received or given) that betray an individual's personal understanding of right and wrong. As elaborated above,

Moral injury originates (1) at an individual level when a person perpetuates, fails to prevent or bears witness to a serious act that transgresses deeply held moral beliefs and expectations which leads to inner conflict because the experience is at odds with their personal core ethical and moral beliefs and/or (2) at an organizational level, when serious acts of transgression have been caused by or resulted in a betrayal of what is culturally held to be morally right in a "high-stakes" situation by those who hold legitimate authority.⁴⁵

This study specifically recruited veterans from the Reserve component of the military. The United States military service is divided into two components: active duty and the Reserve component. The National Guard (Army and Air Force) and the Reserves (Army, Navy, and Marine Corps) make up what is referred to as the "Reserve component." For the Reserve component, military service is part-time, in contrast with the full-time active duty forces. Due to this part-time status, there is a presumption that Reserve component service members are less professional or that they are "weekend warriors who only know about a war zone from the latest iteration of *Call of Duty*."⁴⁶ Reserve component service typically includes a monthly "battle assembly," more colloquially referred to as "drill." In theory, the Reserve component service members accomplish a month's worth of tasks in one weekend. During the summer months, Reserve component service members attend various annual training events throughout the country, typically over a two-week period. Once service members are deployed, there is no difference between the type of mission in which the Regular Army and the Reserve component participates. In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, an estimated 46 percent of service members have come from the Reserve component.

⁴⁵ Carey et al., "Moral Injury," 1220.

⁴⁶ Joseph Kassabian, *The Hooligans of Kandahar: Not All War Stories Are Heroic* (TCK Publishing, 2017), location 267, Kindle.

In 2007, the US Secretary of Defense released a memorandum outlining the deployment cycle for the Reserve component. For every year an active duty member was deployed to a combat zone, he or she was to receive two years dwell time at home station (to train and prepare for the next rotation, in theory). A Reserve component member was to receive five years of nondeployed time for every year of deployment.⁴⁷ However, this has not been a reality for either component. The Congressional Budget Office has reported that even when a unit is stateside, its members are not actually at home station but are equipping and training to deploy again.⁴⁸ Further, when deployed, the deployment of “boots on ground” has extended to fifteen months (with some deployments even extended to eighteen months).

This transitions into another focus of this dissertation: my focus on moral injury is at the level of *reintegration* of the Reserve component. Reintegration is the stage in a deployment cycle in which service members return to their home station. At the home station, the unit goes through various physical and behavioral health checks, representatives explain new financial resources, and the VA gives presentations on new benefits. From these stations, the service members return home, and the deployment “tour” is complete.

This dissertation reflects on the role of *military chaplains* in their caregiving capacity with those experiencing MIEs. Military chaplains are commissioned as officers in the various military branches. Each military chaplain has an ecclesiastical endorsement from his or her specific faith community and, at a minimum, a master of divinity degree (or its equivalent). Military chaplains, in the North American context, have provided religious support to service members since the Revolutionary War. Originally, the military chaplaincy was exclusively Christian. Prior to President Abraham Lincoln’s order in 1861, only Christians were allowed—

⁴⁷ Terri Tanielian and Lisa H. Jaycox, *Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

by military order—to serve as chaplains because it was assumed that “all U.S. military personnel (and indeed, all U.S. citizens) would be Christians who need the solace of their faith in martial contexts.”⁴⁹ The Board of Delegates of American Israelites pressured President Lincoln to make provisions for Jewish service members, and Lincoln obliged by expanding the designated qualifications from endorsement by “a Christian denomination” to “some religious denomination.”⁵⁰ Thereafter, chaplains of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish backgrounds could be found holding the office of chaplain. In the twentieth century, the ranks of chaplains have expanded to include chaplains of Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu backgrounds.

This dissertation is committed to methods of *liberative praxis*, which is found within a methodological strand of hermeneutics in practical and pastoral theology that privileges the marginalized and oppressed in communities of faith and works to liberate these individuals to various pathways of freedom. Liberative praxis relies on theological insights from Latin American and Black liberation theologies, including God’s preferential option for (and solidarity with) the marginalized, a praxis-based ecclesiology, and a God who is experienced within history (and who even experiences suffering).

I am arguing that a military chaplain, by using liberative praxis, represents what Antonio Gramsci refers to as an *organic intellectual*. For Gramsci, an organic intellectual has the responsibility of organizing and leading from within his or her class structure. Organic intellectuals represent the aspirations of their own class, and they ensure that new ideas filter to the masses. These ideas are not forced upon people in a hierarchical, top-down fashion as propaganda; rather, they seep into everyday life as values, language, and culture. Building on

⁴⁹ Ed Waggoner, “Taking Religion Seriously in the U.S. Military: The Chaplaincy as a National Strategic Asset,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 3 (September 2014): 705.

⁵⁰ Doris L. Bergen, introduction to *The Sword and the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to Twenty-First Century*, ed. Doris L. Bergen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 13.

these insights from Gramsci, this dissertation is strengthened through an analysis of *ideology*.

Ideology is the set of ideas with which people structure their existence and rationalize inconsistencies within their worldviews. Ideology is, therefore, any set of beliefs that determines social behavior.

Finally, this dissertation is committed to a *revised praxis method of correlation* between a theological analysis and a situational analysis (from cultural studies) of Phillip's experience. Protestant theologian Paul Tillich is credited as establishing correlation as a theological method. In the first volume of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, he offered a way to understand the queries brought about through human experience. The answers to these questions are to be found in the Christian tradition. He states:

In using the method of correlation, systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions.⁵¹

However, in this method there is no space for human experience to speak to tradition and provide its own answers. Theology supplies all the answers to life's questions. The correlation is merely one-way. A better correlational method would involve correlates mutually influencing each other.

Catholic theologian David Tracy and US practical theologian Don Browning revised the correlation model to show the potential of greater mutuality between theological reflection and contemporary situations.⁵² The Christian tradition, for example, can revise itself based on insights from the social sciences; the correlation is not just how the Christian tradition improves

⁵¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 62.

⁵² As a brief aside, although Tracy is credited with fully developing the mutual critical correlation method, pastoral theologian Seward Hiltner (a contemporary of Tillich) addressed similar themes in his *Preface to Pastoral Theology: The Ministry and Theory of Shepherding* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958). Hiltner posited that Christianity's revelation is never fully complete, and therefore, relying on its transcendence without acknowledging its immanence in the present situation is troublesome. Hiltner asks, "But to what extent is correlation a two-way method? We believe that a full two-way street is necessary in order to describe theological method." *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, 223n19.

the social sciences. One critique of this method is that there is a worry that the religious tradition becomes merely one more relative correlate and thus loses its authority. Tracy is aware of this concern, and he explains a methodological commitment of this approach. First, on the theological side, there is no such thing as an uninterpreted religious experience. Every religious experience needs interpreting. Similarly, “the contemporary situation” is also not given in an “already interpreted” form (in a Gadamerian sense, which is detailed further in chapter 3); it must also be interpreted. Their mutual correlation is not a relationship built on the sublimation of one to the detriment of the other. With this momentum, Tracy defines his revised correlation method as follows: “*Practical theology* is the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian fact and the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation.”⁵³

Rebecca Chopp, a feminist practical theologian, raises foundational critiques concerning the mutual critical correlation method. Her primary concern is that Tracy’s method becomes just another tool for the “old tag game of liberal, progressive theology that posits an underlying unity between individuals and tradition, and believes that it can reconcile, through understanding, human experience to reality.”⁵⁴ In other words, for Chopp, the tradition from which Tracy’s method speaks is one of privilege. Therefore, holding that view in tension, how can this approach speak for those in need of liberation from subjugation? Tracy’s method, Chopp argues, privileges certain communities and certain concerns over others. Chopp’s alternative is a “revised praxis method of correlation.” What differentiates Chopp’s revised praxis method of correlation, then,

⁵³ David Tracy, “The Foundation of Practical Theology,” in *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World*, ed. Don S. Browning (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), 76.

⁵⁴ Rebecca S. Chopp, “Practical Theology and Liberation,” in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 120.

is a commitment to “human suffering” and a telos of “social transformation that alleviates this suffering.”⁵⁵

Audience

This dissertation has three audiences in mind, in descending order. First, I am writing to my dissertation committee. My committee includes pastoral theologian Duane Bidwell, PhD (dissertation chair), practical theologian Kathleen Greider, PhD, and cultural studies theorist Henry Krips, PhD. Second, I am writing to military chaplains. It is my intention to fill a gap in intervention by moving from a solely psychological approach to a treatment plan that is an interdisciplinary practical and pastoral theology. Filling this gap will provide and empower chaplains with ways to conceptualize moral injury in another light and to engage resources that either I provide or that are creatively produced via their own faith traditions. Third, I am writing to spiritual care clinicians, namely VA chaplains. As a military chaplain, I only support veterans for a short window of time; long-term care happens in VA facilities throughout the country. Collaboration is possible.⁵⁶

Scope and Limitations

This dissertation is qualitative in methodology and therefore contains inherent limitations. The results are limited to the participant in this study. This is not to say that there are not transferable experiences within this particular individual’s narrative; but this dissertation is not attempting to make sweeping generalizations about combat reintegration. With that said, this dissertation is also not a cultural recommendation for combat reintegration. I am not necessarily

⁵⁵ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 167.

⁵⁶ Jeffrey M. Pyne et al., “Mental Health Clinician and Community Clergy Collaboration to Address Moral Injury in Veterans and the Role of the Veterans Affairs Chaplain,” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* (August 15, 2018): 1-19.

interested in the ideological piece if it is removed from the lived experiences of veterans who are isolated from reintegration because of moral injuries that transgress deeply held beliefs.

From an intersectional perspective, I am not explicitly looking for how MIEs are exacerbated by other axes of oppression. For this case study, my participant is a straight, white, and cisgender male. I am not explicitly looking at how, for example, women or people of color experience reintegration differently from other individuals. Much work has been done on Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and the harrowing implications of this for service members, and I would presume that this work has a direct correlation with how service members with MIEs are treated; however, this falls outside the boundaries of this dissertation.⁵⁷ This dissertation is not attempting to offer universal practices for reintegration for congregational ministers to use with veterans. I hope that this could be a natural by-product of this work, but it broadens the scope of this dissertation past a manageable level.

Finally, I want to say a word about my locatedness as this relates to the dissertation. Pastoral and practical theologian James Poling, although he identifies as a member of the “oppressor group” (straight, white, male, and educated in the hegemonic academic system), considers himself “bonded to the oppressed group,” a position that he acknowledges is “untenable.”⁵⁸ Sharing Poling’s location, I—like Poling—humbly seek to correct this untenable posture by reflectively selecting the people with whom I collaborate and share my life.

More specifically, though, I am a United States Army Reserve chaplain at the rank of major and ordained in the United Church of Christ (UCC). I received my commission as an officer in the United States Army Reserve and into the Chaplain Candidate Program in 2008.

⁵⁷ Pastoral theologian Kristen Leslie’s work addresses the moral injuries of MST in “Betrayal by Friendly Fire,” in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader*, ed. Robert Emmet Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer, 245-255 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018); “‘Ma’am, Can I Talk to You?’ Pastoral Care with Survivors of Sexualized Violence at the United States Air Force Academy,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 15, no. 1 (2005): 78-92.

⁵⁸ James Poling, “Where I Live is How I Work,” *Pastoral Psychology* 43, no. 3 (1995): 180-181.

During my career, I have served as a battalion chaplain to a transportation battalion and an engineer battalion. I have served as a brigade chaplain to a civil affairs brigade, as the family life chaplain at the command headquarters for Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations (Airborne), and as a command chaplain for a civil affairs command. In 2014, I served as the Task Force Scorpion Chaplain with the 315th Engineer Battalion, United States Army Reserve, stationed on the Kandahar Airfield (KAF) in Afghanistan.

Part of this battalion's mission was the task of "de-scoping" (tearing down) smaller US installations and bases throughout Afghanistan. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was set to end on December 31, 2014; therefore, the engineers I served alongside worked tirelessly to ensure that the US military could turn over much of its footprint in Afghanistan to the Afghan government. Starting January 1, 2015, the United States' new mission, Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), was supposed to begin a more concerted "advisor" role with our Afghan colleagues. As I left Fort Bliss, Texas, I thought the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were over. I was proud that I was a part of its closing.

However, as I write this in 2019, US forces continue to operate *normal* combat operations in Afghanistan. Personally, a season of disillusionment followed my deployment. After my deployment I continued to provide pastoral counseling to soldiers and their families after multiple combat tours. Marriages and familial relationships were rattled, frayed, and destroyed by nearly two decades of US war efforts. From my perspective as a caregiver, my frustrations grew: these wars were supposed to be over. It was only through theorizing and communing with veterans' organizations, such as Veterans for Peace and the Veterans Working Group of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), that I began to reconceptualize the power of the military-industrial complex within society. Perhaps it is more apropos to describe the

powerlessness of people in society to critique or hold one another accountable for these ongoing wars.

My own political commitments began to shift when I returned home and as I continued my doctoral studies. I have supported the Democratic Party for much of my adult life. My commitments have ranged from directly supporting the John Kerry campaign in 2004 as a College Democrat at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to a role where voting was my sole civic duty. My disillusionment grew for the two primary political parties: the Democratic Party, as well as the Republican Party, has not put forward a consistent and realistic plan to support the ending of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan nor a holistic plan to care for veterans. The political process, as it currently functions, does not adequately have the interests of veterans in mind. The burgeoning moral injury research contained in this dissertation assisted me in coming to terms with my realization that I felt betrayed by the military, and by my country. We are still fighting. We are still dying. This is a moral injury that this dissertation seeks to critique.

In terms of professional credentials, I am a board-certified chaplain (BCC) through the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), and I have served as a hospital staff chaplain, specifically specializing in pediatrics, since 2012. I will speak from my tradition while honoring the multivalent backgrounds and traditions of the participant in this dissertation, just as I do with *all* my soldiers. My situatedness as a progressive Christian chaplain entails that I find beauty, truth, meaning, and complexity in every religious tradition.

Originality and Contributions

This dissertation contributes to the fields of practical theology and pastoral theology in four ways. First, I am integrating moral injury and ideology critique. The focus on individual pathology has not adequately critiqued the broader social and cultural implications of MIEs that

call military service into question and the dominant cultural ideologies about the military. Focusing on ideology compels society to examine, in close detail, how our treatment of veterans (through our practices or beliefs about military service) shapes us as a society. Chaplains need to be able to conceptualize the ideological apparatuses at work in order to find a way through those matrices. Further, although there are abundant Marxist critiques of neoliberalism, intersectionality, and economics within spiritual care and counseling, there is a lack of post-Marxist ideology critique in the field. This dissertation brings these conversation partners into closer proximity and more explicitly discusses how ideology functions and ways in which spiritual care providers can move through the malaise.

Second, I am adding the societal role in moral injury as an explicit influence in the reintegration of people with traumatic experiences. Building on my first point, the role of society is vastly underutilized. Veterans are not isolated individuals; rather, veterans come from and return to communities of people. Countless moral injury resources note that healing happens within communities; therefore, what role does society play in reintegration? The inherent military and civilian divide does not help this reintegration either. This dissertation will uniquely show via interviews and other research the prominence of society's role in exacerbating moral injury.

Third, I am exploring how moral codes and identity are reconstructed at the communal level. This further contributes to research that privileges the role of community over and against research that remains pathologizing and focused on diagnosis. In that same vein, this dissertation adds to the ongoing conversation around pastoral theology's use of narrative therapy.

Finally, military chaplains are traditionally understood as "force multipliers." Historically, the US Army Chaplain Corps has functioned to provide religious support to assigned service

members. Within the function of offering religious support, a chaplain might provide the religious rites and services he or she is authorized to perform as an ordained or credentialed religious leader. However, particularly in the post-9/11 landscape, military chaplains are now tasked with new functions that include advising the command on issues of morale, morals, ethics, and religion and *how* these factors impact the current mission. In combat especially, the military expects its chaplains to rally behind the cause of the country. Waggoner, drawing from Pentagon documents, states that chaplains “as a multiplier of force . . . speak martially, patriotically, and divinely all at once.”⁵⁹ I argue that military chaplains can function in an additional way that supports praxiological commitments of solidarity by functioning as Gramscian intellectuals. Chaplains, even within the hegemonic military-industrial complex, can provide solidaristic support to veterans with moral injury.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 2 expands my brief survey in this chapter of the closely related literature in the field of practical and pastoral theology, on moral injury, and on ideology critique.

Chapter 3 explains the qualitative methodology of case study used to study the MIE of my research participant, who is reintegrating back into society. In this chapter I also make the case as to why phenomenology and grounded theory were not adequate methodologies for this project. Beyond case study, I am using a liberative praxis model of care from practical and pastoral theologian Emmanuel Lartey. To support these methods of practice, I will further elucidate the practices of narrative therapy and its central tenets.

Chapter 4 reports the findings of this study and analyzes the experience of what was learned from the interaction between Phillip and myself. I will detail three prominent themes of alienation from my coding: belonging, divided identities, and betrayal. Within that betrayal, there

⁵⁹ Waggoner, “Taking Religion Seriously,” 718.

is a theological component as well: Phillip felt abandoned by God and distanced from his primary religious resources of prayer, community accountability and support, and music.

Chapter 5 summarizes an open-relational understanding of God's pathos and how this is vital for understanding the reintegration of veterans with MIEs. This is accomplished more specifically through a close study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's early work.

First, I interact with Stuart Hall's concept of ideology and decipher whether it is possible to exist within the ideological apparatuses present in US society. Hall offers three hypothetical readings of media texts: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional.⁶⁰ I argue that an oppositional reading is possible, and that it paves the way for a more holistic communal reintegration. Bonhoeffer upholds this communal reintegration.

I am limiting my study of Bonhoeffer to his early work in his doctoral dissertation, which was later published as *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*.⁶¹ This writing is essential in my dissertation as it enhances and supports a theological understanding of the importance of community and a God that is present within the traumatic experiences of an MIE. Bonhoeffer's insights are operationalized through the communal-contextual paradigm of spiritual care and counseling. Specifically, the work of Stephen Pattison and Bruce Rogers-Vaughn provide the functions of care most in line with my theological commitments.

Finally, chapter 6 provides a summary of this project and offers paradigmatic proposals for military chaplains who provide care to Reserve and National Guard veterans. In this chapter I

⁶⁰ Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis (New York: Routledge, 1980), 136-137.

⁶¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 1, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Joachim Von Soosten, Reinhard Kraus, and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

also suggest how veterans can privilege their MIEs in opposing American ideological mythologizing of military service. I argue that chaplains can empower veterans to resist the marginalization of their experiences and that care requires social advocacy through public discourse. Part of this empowerment is helping veterans negotiate the tensions inherent within newfound freedoms. As a caregiver, the goal is not to romanticize counterhegemony, but to grapple with the risks of opposing dominant ideologies. Building from Hall's insights in chapter 5, I utilize Antonio Gramsci's "war of position" as a way to understand the formation of counterhegemonic groups. Military chaplains function as Gramscian intellectuals and live in conscious solidarity with their service members. The specific spiritual practices of conscious solidarity complete my practical theological method. These practices include a liturgy of solidarity through which a revitalized prayer life and the sharing of war stories is cultivated in a counterhegemonic community. Beyond communal support, at the individual caregiving relationship level, pastoral counseling practices that are informed by narrative therapy allow for a re-authoring of MIEs. The inclusion of both communal practices *and* individual practices upholds my commitment to envision pastoral theology as affirming "the living human document within the web."⁶²

⁶² Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 51.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Practical theology is a subdiscipline of theology that generates theological reflection on the doctrines and practices of religious communities out of sustained attention to the suffering and hope of persons toward the goal of transforming the society.¹

— James Poling

Ideology is now understood not as what is hidden and concealed, but precisely as what is most open, apparent, manifest. . . It is precisely its “spontaneous” quality, its transparency . . . which makes common sense, at one and the same time, “spontaneous,” ideological and *unconscious*.²

— Stuart Hall

As this dissertation is distinctly a work of practical theology, I meld multiple academic disciplines to better conceptualize the ideological aspects of reintegrating people with moral injuries into civilian life. This literature review, then, is an attempt to map these influences together to enhance the analysis of the lived experience of my research participant (see chapter 4). First, I review the discipline of practical theology and its attempts to maintain relevance as a discipline and its renaissance in the mid- to late-twentieth century. Specifically, I am interested in the liberative hermeneutical work of practical theology. Second, I detail what I am defining as the “first-generation” of moral injury research, tracing its development from Jonathan Shay and other clinician-researchers, while also noting the handful of theologians interacting with the concept of moral injury. In the third and final section, I excavate my primary cognate

¹ James Poling, *Deliver Us from Evil: Resisting Racial and Gender Oppression* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), xvi.

² Stuart Hall, “Culture, the Media, and the ‘Ideological Effect’,” in *Mass Communication and Society*, ed. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott (London: Sage Publications, 1977), 325, quoted in Henry Krips, “Ideology and its Pleasures: Althusser, Žižek, and Pfaller,” *Continental Thought & Theory: A Journal of Intellectual Freedom* 2, no. 1 (June 2018): 336.

conversational partner of British cultural studies, in particular the post-Marxist ideology critique of theorist Stuart Hall. I turn to ideology critique to correct the silo effect of the psychological focus on individual suffering and pathology that dominates moral injury literature. To properly situate Hall's contribution, I plot a course of ideology critique from Karl Marx through two subsequent Marxists more conducive to Hall's project: Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser.

Practical Theology

In this section, I narrate practical theology's story in three parts. First, through Friedrich Schleiermacher, I describe practical theology's historical struggle of seeking status as an academic discipline. Second, I address the field's ambiguity through American practical theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore, who offers four helpful usages of the term *practical theology* and their relevance for the field. Third, in conjunction with the history of Miller-McLemore's third interpretation of *practical theology*—"an approach to theology and religious faith"—I focus on the renaissance of practical theology in the twentieth century. This renaissance foreshadows the liberative praxis further developed in chapter 3.

The Crown of the Theological Tree: Practical Theology

Practical theology's emergence is properly attributed to the father of modern liberal theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher.³ For Schleiermacher, practical theology pertained to the work of the minister within the church. Schleiermacher's place in this narrative is better understood within the setting of the Western university model, which was profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment. The Western university upheld a limited understanding of *Wissenschaft*

³ Gisbert (Gijsbertus) Voetius, a seventeenth-century Reformed theologian and professor in Utrecht, is credited as the first person to use the term *practical theology*. Although Voetius is important as an ancestor of practical theology, systematic theologian Edward Farley notes that Voetius's usage was an "isolated instance in the seventeenth century." Edward Farley, "Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 2.

(usually translated as *science* but more accurately understood as knowledge resulting from systematic academic study in any area) as the unifying goal of the university. Knowledge was discovered objectively in texts and laboratories. Thus, the scientific method unified the “pure academic disciplines (*reine Wissenschaft*).”⁴ Academic theology was no different; it landed on what American practical theologian Don Browning refers to as the Protestant *quadrivium* of biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology.⁵ The subject matter of practical theology, as a discipline, was formulated as being the application of the other theological disciplines. Therefore, “application” was the most prominent description of practical theology at this stage in its development.

Importantly, it was not just practical theology that had to fight for its place: theology overall sought an esteemed position within a university model that prized objectivity and repeatability. Schleiermacher painstakingly argued that theology is a positive science and that an educated clergy is essential. To understand what Schleiermacher meant by *positive science*, it is helpful to return to *Wissenschaft*, which indicates the pursuit of knowledge through a rigorous and critical discourse of study. Thus, Schleiermacher’s recommendation for an educated clergy makes sense: those who take on the work of the church must bear responsibility for how they come to knowledge. Further, positive science is differentiated from pure science in that a positive science is “formed by combining various areas of inquiry—cutting across some of the pure sciences, so to speak—into a unified whole for the sake of some practical purposes.”⁶

Schleiermacher made his claim for theology as a positive science by reducing the *quadrivium* to

⁴ Gijsbert D. J. Dingemans, “Practical Theology in the Academy: A Contemporary Overview,” *The Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 83.

⁵ Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 60.

⁶ James Duke and Howard Stone, “An Orientation,” in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Caring: Selections from Practical Theology*, ed. James O. Duke and Howard Stone, trans. James O. Duke (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 18.

three disciplines: philosophical, historical, and practical theology. In his original lecture notes, Schleiermacher used the imagery of a tree to make his point: philosophical theology represented the roots (*Wurzel*) of the tree; historical theology made up the trunk (or body, *Körper*); and practical theology was the crown (*Krone*). Schleiermacher, however, removed the tree analogy from his final notes because his editors criticized the priority given to practical theology as the crown.⁷ The influence of the Enlightenment on Schleiermacher is evident in his imagery, since practical theology is the crown that absorbs nutrients, issues new theological growth, and produces fruit. Room remained, however, for practical theology's development; practical theology would come to be structured as "practice to theory and back to practice," rather than as the alternative of "theory-to-practice."⁸ I now want to offer a description of the four ways the term *practical theology* gets used.

Four Uses of Practical Theology

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Religion, Psychology, and Culture at the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University, states that four things are indicated by the term *practical theology*: "an activity of believers," a "curricular area," an "approach to theology and religious faith," and an "academic discipline."⁹ In the first usage of the term—an activity of believers—Miller-McLemore is interested in naming the connections made by "believers" between their beliefs and their practices. Second, she identifies the usage of the term for the program of study in seminaries and divinity schools that is the curricular area called "practical theology." Practical theology as a curricular area is of note as the subdisciplines are (typically) pastoral care, homiletics, mission, evangelism, leadership, and education. These

⁷ Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 2.

⁸ Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology*, 43.

⁹ Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 106.

fields are connected under the auspices of practical theology because their common goal is to enrich ministerial practice.

The third usage of the term practical theology—an approach to theology and religious faith—places practical theology as a method. This is primarily how this dissertation operationalizes practical theology: I, as a practical theologian, am seeking to critically understand how veterans in different locations and under different circumstances make meaning out of MIEs and then attempt to integrate these experiences into civilian life. To say this is to hold in tension a field that has moved from application to a theology that has “pragmatic” and “normative” tasks.¹⁰ Miller-McLemore identifies this as a focus on *telos*, in that practical theologians are working toward a larger end. The *telos* of this dissertation is learning from my veteran participant how ideology impacts reintegration. From that understanding and lived experience, I proceed to focus on intervention and spiritual care practices to support veterans.

Finally, Miller-McLemore asserts that *practical theology* is used to refer to an academic discipline, what Gijsbert Dingemans calls a “science of action (*Handlungswissenschaft*).”¹¹ Dingemans is a helpful conversation partner here because he names what enables the discipline to thrive: its “empirical-analytical,” “hermeneutical,” and “critical-political approaches.”¹² The empirical-analytical approach collects descriptive facts about a community. The hermeneutical approach moves away from the quantitative focus of the empirical-analytical aspect and creates a “thick description” of a community and its context.¹³ The critical-political approach begins by focusing on the oppressed in communities of faith and then brings their concerns back to the

¹⁰ These are two of Richard Osmer’s four tasks of practical theology discussed in *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008). I unpack the four tasks below.

¹¹ Dingemans, “Practical Theology in the Academy,” 87.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *Thick description* is a crucial term, and task, for practical theologians. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz is credited with coining this term in his 1973 text, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

academy, the church, and the society. This approach works in tandem with conversation partners such as Latin American liberation theologians, Black liberation theologians, and feminist and womanist theologians. The concerns of the oppressed have helped forge the renaissance of the discipline of practical theology.

Practical Theology's Renaissance

In the wake of the failure of the liberal experiment of human progress in the face of the catastrophic destruction, dehumanization, and death caused by the First and Second World Wars, theology needed a substantive reevaluation of its mission. Practical theology sought new inroads for relevance in this postmodern cultural context. Practical theologians pushed the boundaries of research and discovered new areas of contribution. They were beginning to ask fresh questions, and these questions were no longer questions solely about epistemology or morality; rather, the questions in the mid-twentieth century centered on the subject matter, the tasks, and the theological nature of practical theology.

This shift, of course, did not occur in a vacuum; the rise of post-Christendom and practical philosophy—what American practical theologian Andrew Root describes as “pragmatism, Marxism, and Aristotelian perspectives”—highlighted an elevated view of reflexivity.¹⁴ The elevated view of reflexivity made the case that the living human document is as credible a source of truth as other texts. Anton Boisen, the founder of clinical pastoral education (CPE), developed the living human document method, positing that the same rigor that went into studying biblical texts or literary texts could be applied to individuals in a caregiving relationship. Practical theology had new conversation partners as well, including psychology and the ethnographic advances in the social sciences (e.g., anthropology and sociology). Emerging

¹⁴ Andrew Root, “Practical Theology: What Is It and How Does It Work,” *Journal of Youth Ministry* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 56.

medical models of training and supervision that emphasized clinical placement and case studies transformed practical theological reflection.

Latin American and Black liberation theologies and feminist and womanist theologies gained increasing visibility. These voices prioritized new pedagogies and practices from the oppressed and challenged traditional religious practices and doctrines. In an incisive comment on the importance of liberation theologies, Elaine Graham, Heather Watson, and Frances Ward state that oppressed communities worked to “‘*democratize*’ *theology* as a ‘work of the people’, in an effort to return it to those on the ‘underside of history’ whose voices and perspectives were formerly neglected.”¹⁵ The democratization of theology within traditional Christian denominations is more than a minor footnote in practical theology’s story. This empowering of the laity ushered in paradigms in which a theory of action was implemented in the world. It changed who gets to define theology.

All of this change is not without critique, however. Returning again to feminist practical theologian Rebecca Chopp, she cautions against allowing these new methodologies, particularly the liberationist paradigm, and the renaissance overall from becoming just a veiled attempt at maintaining modernity’s (and theology’s) status quo. Her critique specifically concerns how the correlation methods of liberal revisionism are operationalized in such a way that they continue to oppress the oppressed by taking agency from them.¹⁶ Her critique is critical for this dissertation: namely, how tenable is it to speak a word of liberation from within one of history’s most hegemonic forces (i.e., the American military-industrial-complex)? The usage of cultural studies assists in answering those concerns, while liberative praxis continues to be important for calling systems of oppression into question, even from the periphery. Chopp’s practical theology is a

¹⁵ Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 3. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶ Chopp, “Practical Theology and Liberation,” 135.

“way of radical action-critique of political and social structures that gave voice to ‘nonpersons.’”¹⁷

As a guidepost for what is to come in chapter 3, I want to conclude with praxis. Praxis is not merely a reflection on action (a first- and second-order reflection), but a reflection on action and reflection that inherently works to influence and change both (a second- and third-order reflection). Randy Maddox succinctly states that praxis “is neither pure theory nor mere technique, but *phronesis*—a wisdom that interrelates the universal and the particular.”¹⁸ Speaking about theology, praxis does four things: (1) it applies theological theories to subject fields (the earlier approach of applying church theories to other disciplines); (2) it analyzes subject fields (a dialectical approach of placing the current situation in conversation with various partners); (3) it provides a critical theory for the subject field (moving from descriptive tasks toward normative and pragmatic solutions to critique the subject matter); and (4) it correlates theory and praxis (a critical dialectical reflection on praxis).¹⁹ This dissertation is closely aligned to task three. I am moving the conversation beyond descriptive and interpretive understandings of moral injury toward a critical analysis of how practices are enacted that handle ideology and its place in social life.

To truly understand praxis from a Marxist perspective, one must understand that it is never merely a reflection on practice; it must involve change, or “revolution.” This happens through a dialectic of practice, reflection on practice, and the synthesis of praxis. The material interests of the ruling class drive society, and therefore, these interests determine how social relations function. To be emancipated from this situation, the goal is not to engage abstractly

¹⁷ Eric Stoddart, *Advancing Practical Theology: Critical Discipleship for Disturbing Times* (London: SCM Press, 2014), 93.

¹⁸ Randy L. Maddox, “Practical Theology: A Discipline in Search of a Definition,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18 (1991): 166.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

with the ruling class but to struggle for change through an elevated self-consciousness. In other words, the goal is not *orthodoxy* (right belief); rather, the goal is an *orthopraxis* of changed behavior. Therefore, as Marx himself famously stated, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point is to change it.”²⁰ With Chopp’s warning (and Marx’s maxim) in mind, the goal is to change how we understand ideology in order to better reintegrate veterans. Thus, a more concentrated review of moral injury research is warranted.

Moral Injury

I want to situate moral injury in its historical context via two parts. First, I will note Jonathan Shay’s work with Vietnam veterans as a historical precedent for the current work on moral injury. After Shay’s initial work, first-generation moral injury research has shifted to focus on individual acts of commission or omission, and these insights are fully ensconced within psychology. Second, I will highlight the various theologians interacting with moral injury and discuss their work to develop interventions for care. I conclude this section with a global critique of these theologians (particularly the pastoral theologians) and their work on moral injury: namely, they seek to enact practices that do not critique the ideological myths of military service. Without critiquing dominant ideologies, American veterans will continue to experience a gap in treatment; therefore, the binary of “hero” or “head case” prevails.

From Disorder to Injury: Moral Injury’s History

It is prudent to begin with Jonathan Shay, as his work with Vietnam veterans is considered the first to differentiate the stressors leading to moral injury from the criterion of

²⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 145.

PTSD.²¹ Further, Shay moved away from referring to these injuries as “disorders” and instead called them “injuries.” He writes, “Combat PTSD, is a war injury. Veterans with Combat PTSD are war wounded, carrying the burdens of sacrifice for the rest of us as surely as the amputees, the burned, the blind, and the paralyzed carry them.”²² Shay’s work noted three necessary categories to classify an event as morally injurious: (1) there has been a betrayal of what is morally right, (2) by someone who holds legitimate authority, and (3) in a high-stakes situation.²³ Shay’s work has also been well received because he connects the experience of betrayal in Vietnam with the Homeric narrative. Shay describes this connection as an “experiment” that reveals “living knowledge to us today.”²⁴ For example, Shay describes how, within Homer’s epic poem *The Iliad*, Achilles experiences a betrayal (i.e., a moral injury) by his commander, Agamemnon, and how Achilles responds to this betrayal. Shay’s goal is to attempt to underscore a sort of universality of moral ambiguities inherently prevalent in combat. To elaborate,

The epics teach no lesson at all to modern forces on weapons, planning, communications, tactics, organization, training, or logistics. But for those who go to war and return from it today, the epics still vibrate with meaning on cohesion, leadership, and ethics.²⁵

I agree with Shay that there are principles of combat that have remained unchanged, particularly in the sense of what it means to kill, to watch others get killed, and to attempt to integrate this into any sense of normalcy at home. However, Shay’s conflation and universalizing of the experiences of *all* wars misses several essential nuances of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Primarily, in the operating environment of the post-9/11 Global War on Terrorism,

²¹ Although he does not use moral injury terminology, Robert Jay Lifton’s 1973 book, *Home from War: Learning from Vietnam Veterans* (New York: Other Press, 2005), does offer similar arguments around moral agency and the effects of guilt and shame. Further, what is helpful for this work is that Lifton critiques how society failed to reintegrate Vietnam veterans.

²² Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 4.

²³ Jonathan Shay, “Moral Injury,” *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 31, no. 2 (2014): 183.

²⁴ Jonathan Shay, “Moral Injury,” *Intertexts* 16, no. 1 (2012): 57.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

war is asymmetrical. A symmetrical war is a traditional conflict between states of roughly equal personnel strength and weapons capabilities. In contrast, an asymmetrical war is fought unconventionally, without traditional nation-state backing, and it is fought on multimodal platforms in what Canadian military chaplain Steve Moore helpfully dissects as “intrastate” warfare.²⁶ To elaborate, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS, ISIL, or IS) is able to recruit from outside Iraq and Syria because it is not a bounded state (although they seek to establish an Islamic Caliphate in the region around Iraq and Syria—the Levant). Individuals are able to pledge allegiance to ISIS without being in Iraq or Syria. This means that when terrorist attacks happen across the world—away from the Levant—ISIS is able to claim responsibility for them. This is asymmetrical warfare. Homer discusses the calamities of war, but it is symmetrical war he addresses; collapsing all warfare into a generalized category is not helpful.

In 2009, Brett Litz and his clinical psychology colleagues expanded the definition of moral injury beyond betrayal by authority figures to isolate the MIE in the subjective agential experience of individual veterans. Their moral injury became “the perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”²⁷ In the space between when Shay noted the phenomenon of moral injury in the early 1990s and the quote from Litz and his colleagues, not much changed, even as the literature burgeoned. Therefore, following 2009, the literature continued to build primarily on these two definitions. The only variation came, perhaps, in 2017, with pastoral theologian Larry Graham’s *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls*, in which Graham attempted to broaden what we understand as moral injury.²⁸ Graham pushes the boundaries of moral injury as a concept past combat and

²⁶ S.K. Moore, *Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace: Religious Leader Engagement in Conflict and Post-conflict Environments* (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), 5-6.

²⁷ Litz et al., “Moral Injury,” 697.

²⁸ Larry Kent Graham, *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017).

military moral injury. Graham uses the framework of combat moral injury to generalize it for everyday use in that “we all struggle with moral injury, when moral injury is broadly understood as the failure to live in accordance with our deepest moral aspirations.”²⁹ Graham, however, keeps the aforementioned moral injury framework in his schema: moral injury is still either received (receptive) or given (agential).

The definitions provided by Shay and Litz were reified, even in Shay’s own writing, with “Moral Injury N for Nash, Litz, & Maguen” referring to the individual definition (the “N” designating Nash) and “Moral Injury S, for Shay” standing for Shay’s authority-figure definition of moral injury.³⁰ Shay has been quick to note that Moral Injury N is still a viable and important strand of moral injury research; he just does not believe he can *proactively* do anything about it, short of “ending the human practice of war.”³¹ Shay currently works with military leaders and highlights the importance of unit cohesion, ethical leadership, and realistic combat training simulation to prepare individuals for Moral Injury S events. It is somewhat easier to prepare leaders not to fail morally than to solve issues inherent in warfare, such as the implications of killing non-combatants (i.e., women and children).

I have proceeded thus far as if military communities as a whole—or even all research clinicians—accept that moral injury should be included alongside PTSD as a combat trauma phenomenon. This, however, is not the case. Even naming the phenomenon “moral” and “injury” is problematic for some. Injury implies physiological harm or damage, so some have offered “moral affront,” “moral distress,” “moral conflict,” “moral pain,” “moral trauma,” “moral

²⁹ Ibid., 11.

³⁰ Shay, “Moral Injury,” *Intertexts*, 59.

³¹ Jonathan Shay, “Moral Leadership Prevents Moral Injury,” in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader*, ed. Robert Emmet Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 304.

wounds,” “moral disruption,”³² “combat-activated onto-ecological disorientation,”³³ and “inner conflict” as alternative terms.³⁴ The Navy and Marine Corps’s doctrinal publication *Combat and Operational Stress Control* insists on designating “stress arising due to moral damage from carrying out or bearing witness to acts or failures to act that violate deeply held belief systems” as *inner conflict* instead of *moral injury*, since *moral injury* was “perceived by some to be pejorative.”³⁵ Following this pattern, others have difficulties with the *moral* part of *moral injury*, preferring instead “emotional injury,” “personal values injury,” “life values injury,” and “spiritual injury.”³⁶

Further still, there is an element in the literature, particularly as it relates to interventions, that holds that the *experience* of something as morally injurious points to a moral identity that is working properly, in that “moral injury cannot afflict a sociopath.”³⁷ In other words, if an individual did not experience a traumatic response from betraying the individual’s moral identity, then a separate phenomenon is possibly taking place. However, this level of pathologizing is not entirely helpful. A categorization in which *not* experiencing an MIE as morally injurious is considered pathological is something that will further isolate the experience of individual veterans and might work to alienate them.

Not surprisingly then, within this ambiguity and minor reification, there is no universally agreed upon classification of moral injury. Some researchers note that due to moral injury’s empirical infancy, it should continue to fall under the auspices of PTSD. Others, including Shay, note the similarities but are resolute in differentiating the two experiences; according to Kent D.

³² Carey et al., “Moral Injury,” 1220.

³³ D. William Alexander, “Gregory is My Friend,” in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader*, ed. Robert Emmet Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 205n13.

³⁴ William P. Nash and Brett T. Litz, “Moral Injury: A Mechanism for War-Related Psychological Trauma in Military Family Member,” *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 16, no. 4 (2013): 368.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Carey et al., “Moral Injury,” 1220.

³⁷ Brock and Lettini, *Soul Repair*, 50.

Drescher and colleagues, there is “universal agreement among subject matter experts that the concept of ‘moral injury’ is needed.”³⁸ I join Shay in emphasizing that moral injury, unlike PTSD, is not primarily connected to neurological responses of fight or flight (“physiological arousal”), and PTSD does not “necessarily involve shame and guilt.”³⁹ Affectively, moral injury is usually a shame response (among other responses listed below) based on actions perpetrated or witnessed in combat. There are common symptoms identified in moral injury, and some of these overlap with PTSD. First, moral injury and PTSD are similar in symptomology in that anger, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and nightmares are common to both, and these symptoms are often self-medicated via substance abuse. But to lump the two phenomena together—although there are overlaps—is to do a disservice to each one.

Moral injury and PTSD are distinct in how they present in an individual, and to merely ascribe the same treatment intervention for both is its own morally injurious event. For example, Prolonged Exposure (PE) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) are the primary intervention models for PTSD groups within the VA, and neither of these paradigms is necessarily helpful for an individual with moral injury. First, in PE, the goal is to address a specific memory by recounting the memory to effectively overcome the stressor through desensitizing oneself to the memory. PE encourages participants to face their fear, so to speak, by confronting a traumatic memory. CBT attempts to change a participant’s thoughts about a behavior or experience, because, in this paradigm, if one changes one’s thoughts, one can possibly change one’s actions. However, these therapeutic formats that rely on re-experiencing and reliving an event are not necessarily beneficial and are possibly injurious for an individual with a complex moral injury.

³⁸ Kent D. Drescher et al., “An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans,” *Traumatology* 17, no. 1 (2001): 10.

³⁹ Jeremy D. Jinkerson, “Defining and Assessing Moral Injury: A Syndrome Perspective,” *Traumatology* 22, no. 2 (2016): 125.

Clinical psychologist Jeremy Jinkerson has attempted to develop a symptomology for MIEs, which will effectively assist in conceptualizing a better communal paradigm for MIE interventions. The core symptomology of moral injury includes guilt, shame, spiritual or existential conflict (including “subjective loss of meaning in life”) and a “loss of trust in self, others, and a transcendent or divine entity.”⁴⁰ At a secondary level, Jinkerson notes the overlapping features I mentioned above: depression, anxiety, anger, re-experiencing the moral conflict, self-harm, and social problems.⁴¹ Although the psychological community is not ready to designate moral injury as a diagnosable condition, Jinkerson still notes that “for moral injury to be identified, the following criteria must be present: (a) a history of morally injurious event exposure, (b) guilt, and (c) at least two additional symptoms, which may be from either the core or secondary symptomatic feature lists.”⁴²

Within a discussion on symptomology, there is further ambiguity with respect to what becomes a moral injury. What happens in the space between an MIE and a moral injury? In Shay’s work, he notes how the military organizational construct can lead to an MIE (whether through the incompetence of leadership or through a lack of accountability). The operating environment of combat can also serve as the platform for an MIE. The intrastate conflicts of asymmetrical battlefields present the ambiguity of threats and personnel. Systematic theologian Duane Larson and chaplain Jeff Züst offer an equation that speaks to this dynamic phenomenon. They state,

One could almost propose a mathematical equation that displays how these terms and events relate, wherein MIE represents morally injurious event, MP is moral pain, and MD refers to moral dissonance. These are all discrete matters in the literature. Thus $MIE + MP \rightarrow MD$. And if moral dissonance is left unaddressed,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 126.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

and the damage compounds, then MD → MI. Together these events and pain are elements of a destructive dissonance that results in moral injury.⁴³

How have clinician-researchers recommended intervening with these destructive dissonances? Within the literature, there is a phenomenon in which the intended audiences reside in silos. There is space for an interdisciplinary role, but there are few sources collaboratively working together to treat MIEs.⁴⁴ For example, psychological essays are “colonized” for psychologists.⁴⁵ As an army reserve chaplain, I can gain insights by reading Jinkerson’s work or that of Litz and his colleagues, but their works provide limited insights for spiritual care. To elaborate, in *Adaptive Disclosure: A New Treatment for Military Trauma, Loss, and Moral Injury*, Litz and his colleagues offer a practical guide for practitioners on how to work with service members on their journey through moral injury.⁴⁶ Adaptive disclosure (AD) is a six-session treatment process created for service members coming to terms with three types of traumatic war experience: life threat, loss, and moral injury. AD is unique in that it is a psychotherapeutic intervention geared solely toward war trauma. An entire chapter of the text is devoted to teaching non-military therapists about the military cultural context in order for them to provide acute level psychotherapy. Litz details the assumptions of AD in another article:

The following assumptions guide our approach: (a) pain means hope. Guilt and shame (from perpetration-based moral injury) and anger (from betrayal-based moral injury) are signs of an intact conscience and expectations of the self and others about goodness, humanity, and justice; (b) goodness is reclaimable; and (c)

⁴³ Duane Larson and Jeff Zust, *Care for the Sorrowing Soul: Healing Moral Injuries from Military Service and Implications for the Rest of Us* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 20.

⁴⁴ Jeffrey Pyne and colleagues have recently worked to bring about collaboration between VA chaplains, behavioral health providers, and community clergy in a VA setting. Jeffrey M. Pyne et al., “Mental Health Clinician and Community Clergy Collaboration to Address Moral Injury in Veterans and the Role of the Veterans Affairs Chaplain,” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* (August 15, 2018): 1-19.

⁴⁵ Tom Frame, “Moral Injury and the Influence of Christian Religious Conviction,” in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader*, ed. Robert Emmet Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 195.

⁴⁶ Brett T. Litz et al., *Adaptive Disclosure: A New Treatment for Military Trauma, Loss, and Moral Injury* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2016).

forgiveness (when applicable, feasible, and therapeutically valuable) and repair are possible.⁴⁷

However, within AD's strict CBT-based interventions, a role for religion and spirituality is absent, though religious and spiritual beliefs can offer crucial therapeutic interventions and meaning-making for some service members. The importance of a "benevolent moral authority," confession, meaning-making, and forgiveness are mentioned in *Adaptive Disclosure* and other places within the Litz canon, but spiritual intervention methods are missing.⁴⁸ Therefore, assumption (c) above is offered as a guide without a mechanism to provide forgiveness and restoration.

Beyond the importance of differentiating moral injury from PTSD, as a chaplain, Litz's text limits my professional scope in how to treat veterans experiencing moral injury. Litz is hesitant about military chaplains lacking behavioral health training using AD. He describes his intervention as a "totally secular approach" and "ill advised" for a chaplain without psychological training.⁴⁹ What is ultimately missed in AD is a thorough analysis of the spiritual implications of moral injury.

In 2018, however, Litz began to acknowledge the role of spirituality in interventions. This acknowledgement led him to alter his intervention and give it a new designator, "adaptive disclosure—enhanced" (AD-E). AD-E is now a twelve-session intervention that appropriates Buddhist spiritual practices of loving-kindness meditation (LKM) to "break through rigidity, numbness, hopelessness, and disconnection, and in the case of moral injury caused by others,

⁴⁷ Brett T. Litz and Jessica R. Carney, "Employing Loving-Kindness Meditation to Promote Self- and Other-Compassion among War Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* (July 12, 2018): 3.

⁴⁸ Litz et al., "Moral Injury," 701-703.

⁴⁹ Brett Litz, email message to the author, February 9, 2016.

anger and resentment (and potential revenge fantasies).”⁵⁰ This is a positive step forward, and once randomized controlled trials are implemented, a better understanding of LKM’s usage can be proffered.

Within the AD-E intervention, LKM is used as “compassion training.”⁵¹ Service members are trained to become aware of their own suffering and the suffering of others and to develop an intention of kindness and compassion to self and other through meditation. I wholeheartedly support veterans utilizing meditative practices, and I think it might do wonders to counteract a military culture in which meditation is seemingly anathema; however, this training is never done with a Buddhist practitioner or with a community of fellow practitioners. The AD-E therapist has the latitude to decide how much and how often to utilize LKM. My critique, of AD-E, is that appropriating LKM detached from a community of practitioners colonizes a spiritual practice of a specific sect of Buddhism. Further, there is a necessity to avoid an intervention that “unwittingly serves the neoliberal hegemony, the very system which is intensifying and multiplying the sorts of sufferings that bring people to psychotherapists.”⁵²

It is too early to tell how successful AD-E will be; however, despite the critiques, utilizing LKM is a step in the right direction as it utilizes spirituality and enacts practices that are “designed to bolster service members’ and veterans’ sense of shared humanity and connection to others. It reduces the distance between oneself and others.”⁵³

One intervention model that focuses on the spiritual distress of combat is Irene Harris’s Building Spiritual Strengths (BSS). BSS is an interfaith intervention model that addresses the spiritual distress dimension of MIEs and emphasizes the existing spiritual resources to make

⁵⁰ Litz and Carney, “Employing Loving-Kindness,” 5.

⁵¹ Ibid., 6.

⁵² Rogers-Vaughn, “Best Practices,” 5.

⁵³ Litz and Carney, “Employing Loving-Kindness,” 6.

meaning of an MIE. BSS has shown that “those who view their spirituality, faith community, and/or Higher Power as sources of support, validation, and acceptance are more able to make healthy meaning and recover than those who don’t.”⁵⁴ Unlike AD and AD-E, BSS is an eight-session group-based intervention in which people “(a) establish group rules and develop rapport, (b) use a modified empty-chair technique to facilitate dialogue with a Higher power or similar spiritual construct, (c) explore prayer/meditative coping techniques, (d) explore theodicy (spiritual explanations for suffering), (e) explore and reframe forgiveness of self and others, and (f) plan for continued support for spiritual growth.”⁵⁵ BSS is an optimal intervention for reintegration as it takes the communal aspect of trauma—and reintegrating that trauma—seriously. I will discuss the importance of relying on techniques (c), (d), and (e) in chapter 6’s liturgy of solidarity.

Spiritual Implications for Intervention

Just as Shay and Litz and his colleagues are indispensable to first-generation moral injury research, womanist theologian Rita Nakashima Brock is as well. Brock has been able to achieve two things that have brought theological awareness to moral injury. First, in December 2008, Rita Brock and Gabriella Lettini began working alongside more than sixty religious leaders, activists, veterans groups, and academics in the Truth Commission on Conscience in War to advocate further education on moral injury. From their work came the 2012 text *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*, which offered an entryway into moral injury research for many chaplains, ministers, and lay people concerned with issues surrounding military

⁵⁴ J. Irene Harris et al., “The Effectiveness of a Trauma-focused Spiritually Integrated Intervention for Veterans Exposed to Trauma,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 67, no. 4 (2011): 425.

⁵⁵ J. Irene Harris et al., “Moral Injury and Psycho-Spiritual Development: Considering the Developmental Context,” *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 2 (January 1, 2015): 262.

involvement.⁵⁶ Through familial narratives and firsthand accounts of reintegration, Brock and Lettini not only highlight the concept of moral injury but also propose theological insights into communal restoration methods that solidify recovery and treatment within religious communities.

Second, Brock was the first codirector of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas. While in that role, Brock and her team of veterans and chaplains traveled the United States providing seminars and workshops to people interested in moral injury. Brock has since left that role to pastoral theologian Nancy Ramsay, and at present, Brock is the Senior Vice President for Moral Injury Programs at Volunteers for America. A similar critique could be levied against Brock and Lettini as against Litz and his colleagues: as they are not spiritual care providers, and specifically, are not military chaplains, their research does not go far enough in providing clinical spiritual resources. Brock somewhat mitigated this by including a chaplain to co-facilitate during Soul Repair seminars, but Brock is a theologian who writes, particularly in *Soul Repair*, from an anti-war starting point.

An anti-war position is not necessarily untenable for moral injury research. There is, however, the potential to introduce a conflicting element into a service member's reintegration: while they may be uncomfortable being labeled in Moon's typology a "hero" or a "head case," they are possibly still proud of their military service. In other words, an anti-war starting point can block interventions for those in need. A better position is one taken up by pastoral theologian Ryan LaMothe in which either returning service members or concerned citizens can become "unconventional warriors" and remain "attached to the warrior ethos, but are critical toward a government that uses its military to further the aims of political and economic elites."⁵⁷ My

⁵⁶ Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

⁵⁷ Ryan LaMothe, "Men, Warriorism, and Mourning: The Development of Unconventional Warriors," *Pastoral Psychology* 66, no. 6 (December 1, 2017): 820.

primary critique of Brock, however, is more global, and it ties in with theological accounts of moral injury. I will provide my critique after describing the work of additional theologians.

Larry Graham's *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls* identifies how a person's understanding of the transcendent impacts not only the view of self, but also how it compounds moral conundrums that can lead to moral injuries. In some events, God is the moral conundrum, as is the case in chapter 4 of this dissertation. A veteran might ask, "How could God allow this MIE to happen? Where was God?" Graham explores alternative ways of naming and framing relational theologies (such as process theology, liberation theologies, and feminist theologies) in which God is present in solidarity with the sufferer. Graham is clear that healing is possible, even when one is dealing with the classical theodicy conundrum. Traditional pastoral theological functions of "healing," "sustaining," and "guiding" are key, and the aim of a revised communal practice from these functions drives the methods in this dissertation.⁵⁸

Graham's pastoral theological work has consistently sought a relational justice that will integrate people *into* communities and will create understanding that people come *from* communities. These insights from Graham offer an excellent entry point into my concern: namely, the communal piece ultimately fails because of the systemic functioning of ideology. Graham describes the "enculturated" systems of ideology as "macrosystemic moral gyroscopes."⁵⁹ He gets to the precipice of communal involvement and reintegration, but backs away to instead focus on "collaborative conversations" that empower "anyone" to normalize the experience of moral injury; however, these collaborative conversations do not engage ideology.⁶⁰

There is an implicit cognitive dissonance in Graham's work in that he can maintain that macrosystemic moral gyroscopes impact individuals and communities; however, his practices

⁵⁸ Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, 89, 121, 171.

⁵⁹ Graham, *Moral Injury*, 39.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

are ones of intra- and interpersonal healing. Graham can state that “much of the moral dissonance, dilemmas, and injury we face today takes its rise because of irreconcilable differences within the macrosystemic moral orientations into which we are enculturated,” yet the practices he describes are interpersonal.⁶¹ Both pastoral theologian Carrie Doehring and I have separately noted threads in Graham’s work on the politics of lamentation that are perfectly situated to provide an intervention for moral injury.⁶²

Zachary Moon, pastoral theologian and military chaplain, offers practical steps for local clergy and congregation members to think about how to reintegrate returning veterans. His work is essential for the provision of competent spiritual care within the current military structure. Moon’s monograph, *Coming Home: Ministry that Matters with Veterans and Military Families*, lays some responsibility for this reintegration on the doorstep of the church, and he aptly provides resources for those who are looking for practical ways to support veterans.⁶³

Moon’s major contributions to the field of moral injury research are his understanding of the limits of our binary view of veterans as “heroes” and “head cases” and his structural analysis concerning how military basic training prepares recruits to adopt the military’s “moral orienting system.” As he states succinctly,

Military recruit training, by design, destabilizes and diminishes the constancy of a recruit’s pre-existing moral orienting system. Having stripped away such moral coding, including embedded values, beliefs, behaviors, and meaningful relationships, military recruit training indoctrinates recruits with a new moral orienting system that supports functioning in military contexts.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid., 39.

⁶² Carrie Doehring, “Military Moral Injury: An Evidence-Based and Intercultural Approach to Spiritual Care,” *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 1 (February 2019): 15-30; Joshua T. Morris, “‘Thank You for Your Service’: Mapping Counter-Memories as a Form of Spiritual Care Support for Moral Injury,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 28, no. 1 (2018): 34-44.

⁶³ Zachary Moon, *Coming Home: Ministry That Matters with Veterans and Military Families* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015).

⁶⁴ Moon, “(Re)Turning Warriors,” 3.

Moon's analysis is that the betrayal of what is right in a combat situation is encapsulated within the broader military cultural construct. Recruits are enculturated into that construct once their previous way of operating is deconstructed in basic training. In combat, cohesive units are vital for survival. However, it is at home, during reintegration, when "irreconcilable dissonances between military moral orienting systems and the moral worlds of civilian life" collide.⁶⁵

Implications for Practical Theology and This Project

My primary critique of these pastoral and practical theologians as they relate to the broader practical theological project on moral injury is that their work is *within* the dominant ideological structure that I am saying is necessary to critique. Remaining within dominant ideologies fundamentally complicates reintegration: while offering a critical differentiation of moral injury from PTSD and enacting spiritual practices, pastoral theologians writing about moral injury have seemingly left the existing dominant ideological structure unaddressed. Ultimately, dominant ideologies are left free from critique, and, left untested, dominant ideologies will continue to bolster support for endless cycles of combat deployments, which can lead to further MIEs.

For example, in Graham's *Moral Injury*, he discusses the story of Gary, an Afghanistan combat veteran. Gary's story fits within Graham's broader section on healing collaborations, so the aim of Gary's vignette is to elucidate how caregivers can provide support to those suffering from moral injuries. Gary is introduced to a pastoral counselor, Ellen. Ellen and Gary have a vulnerable and powerful caregiving relationship, one built on curiosity, awareness of each one's emotions, and a co-creative process of healing. Graham concludes the section by stating, "There must be a phase of revising one's self-assessment and moral actions in light of these prior

⁶⁵ Ibid., 6.

steps.”⁶⁶ At this point, there is a distance between the caregiver and the care receiver. Gary was with Ellen in cocreating a healing narrative; however, in this stage, Gary is alone in a process of re-evaluating his involvement in war that is “very difficult, and takes moral courage too.”⁶⁷ I would argue that Gary is alone during one of the most precarious points of his reintegration. A process is needed in which both Gary and Ellen revise their moral actions in relation to war. What is Ellen curious about? Where are the places in which Gary’s story has caused Ellen to think differently about war, moral injury, and reintegration? Finally, where are the places in which Ellen is healed in the cocreated narrative? To make the final assessment of and action on the MIE solely the responsibility of the veteran is to ultimately fail both the veteran and the caregiver at a crucial point.

What is needed, then, is a critical look at the ideological systems and how they reproduce dominant ideologies. What I am proposing is envisioning how ideology functions to exacerbate existing MIEs. To envision this exacerbation, we must be willing to challenge the ways in which ideology teaches us to think about military service. To achieve this, cultural studies and ideology critique are my primary theoretical interlocutors.

Ideology Critique

I turn to ideology critique to correct the silo effect of the psychological focus on individual suffering and pathology that dominates moral injury literature. Remember, ideology is “necessary for an understanding of interests.”⁶⁸ Building on this, ideology critique, beginning with Karl Marx, has sought to point out the inconsistencies of such beliefs in the dominant system and to show (or “unmask”) to people that ideological beliefs do not reflect reality as it

⁶⁶ Graham, *Moral Injury*, 133.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 68.

“really” is. The goal is to get people away from ideological beliefs and into an un-ideological reality. What follows is a tracing of this technical strand of ideology critique originating with Marx.

Karl Marx

By way of introduction to Marx’s approach to ideology, I want to start with his conception of culture. In *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels posit that “as individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce.”⁶⁹ Further, they go to great lengths to argue that culture is found within humanity’s “double relation” to nature and humanity.⁷⁰ Humanity utilizes and manipulates nature in order to reproduce material life. Naturally, according to Marx and Engels, the manipulation of nature moves into a social organization (whether that be exchanging goods or labor) to more effectively reproduce material life. They argue that this social organization is apparent throughout history.

However, where it connects to ideology is through their materialist view of history. For Marx and Engels, there is no labor in general, but rather, labor and production are anchored in history. They state, “the fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations.”⁷¹ Hall helpfully reiterates that Marx’s concept of culture refers to “the arrangement—the *forms*—assumed by social existence under determinate historical conditions.”⁷²

In terms of this historical materialism, Marx and Engels begin to map how ideas, concepts, and consciousness are produced. The difficulty enters when such maps are experienced

⁶⁹ Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 150. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 157.

⁷¹ Ibid., 154.

⁷² Hall, “‘Ideological Effect’,” 318.

in a way that does not map onto reality. Ideology, then, is a *false* consciousness, a distortion, and an inversion of reality. When Marx and Engels describe ideology as a *false* consciousness it should not be read to claim either that it does not exist or that it is repressed, as in a Freudian framework; rather, it is a false consciousness in that the idea cannot fully encapsulate the entire reality that the idea seeks to describe. Marx and Engels also refer to this phenomenon as a “*camera obscura*,” in that humanity appears “upside-down,” like an “inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.”⁷³ Humans are thrown off from the *actual* conditions of their lives and depend on conditions that they have no control over. These conditions are found within the anatomy of social production: the base and the superstructure.

Ideology is a determining factor within the “base” of Marx’s economic theory. Within this theory, there is a base and a superstructure. The base, which contains the means of production (i.e., tools and machines) and relations of production (i.e., commodities), determines the superstructure. The superstructure (e.g., media, culture, or religion) functions ideologically and reflects the values of the ruling class. Culture reflects, or is determined by, the economic base.

In a classic passage from *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels assert that the ideas of the ruling class always correlate to the positions of the ruling class (what I will henceforth refer to as the Marx-Engels principle). These ideas are located in a specific ideology, or, as they state:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material

⁷³ Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 154.

relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.⁷⁴

Hall addresses whether it is possible to posit a ruling class ideology, but Hall's overall development builds on critiques from two important Marxist theorists: Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci influenced Althusser, but I will begin by discussing Althusser due to the incomparable influence of Gramsci on Hall and Hall's work within the CCCS and the New Left.

Louis Althusser

Althusser broke with traditional Marxism—and therefore the Marx-Engels principle—with his three critiques on ideology. First, for Althusser, it is problematic to assume that the ideological position of a social class will relate directly to its “position in the social relations of production.”⁷⁵ Second, the premise of false consciousness presumes a certain epistemological relationship. Third, and most importantly at present, Althusser, in his seminal essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” posits that knowledge is produced in practices.⁷⁶ Within this critique, Althusser is suggesting that ideological practices are invisible *objectively*. For Althusser, “It is irrelevant whether people are fooled by the ideological lies—ideology sustains its grip either way.”⁷⁷ Thus, we may say, with Althusser, “ideology is *misrecognized* at the level of people's practices, rather than merely *misrepresented* at the level of their ideas.”⁷⁸ The “Ideological State Apparatuses” essay is significant in that it unpacks Althusser's understanding of human subjectivity and explains how people continue to reproduce the conditions of possibility that maintain their domination.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 172-173.

⁷⁵ Hall, “Ideology and Ideological Struggle,” 127.

⁷⁶ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). This essay is one of the most important pieces in cultural studies.

⁷⁷ Krips, “Ideology and Its Pleasures,” 336.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

The first move in the “Ideological State Apparatuses” essay is to look for the *function* of ideology. Ideology works to reproduce social relations of production. In a capitalist social system, labor is reproduced outside of social relations. This is because capitalism is not just a means of production; it also cultivates a need within people to buy the products being produced. How, though, does this ideology function? This moves into the second thesis of the essay: ideology has a material existence. Althusser posits, “An ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material.”⁷⁹ Hall is helpful here in clarifying that a material existence includes practices and customs that provide “the ‘ideas’ with which people figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it, and what they *ought* to do.”⁸⁰ Ideology is inscribed on people’s existences. One’s identity is acquired through material practices, not through what one believes.

Althusser differentiates between “ideological state apparatuses” and the “repressive state apparatuses.” The ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) include religious, educational, familial, legal, political, trade-union, communication (media), and cultural (arts) mechanisms. The repressive state apparatuses (RSAs) include the government, the administration (e.g., taxation), the army, the police, the courts, and the prisons.⁸¹ Therefore, these apparatuses function either through ideology (ideological state apparatuses) or through coercion and violence (repressive state apparatuses). RSAs secure by force the reproduction of production. An example may prove helpful. An employee at a factory cannot take home the product he or she has produced; it is owned by the company, and this is reinforced through the police. The police—or factory security—are called when an individual tries to take a product out of the factory.

⁷⁹ Althusser, “Ideological State Apparatuses,” 166.

⁸⁰ Hall, “Ideology and Ideological Struggle,” 131. Emphasis in original.

⁸¹ Althusser, “Ideological State Apparatuses,” 142-143.

In terms of ISAs, Althusser's "precarious" thesis is that the school replaced the church as the dominant ideological state apparatus.⁸² No other apparatus has the "obligatory (and not least, free) audience" to inculcate an ideology into.⁸³ Schools teach the ultimate bourgeoisie principles of freedom and responsibility as adults. This ideological state apparatus teaches students the skills that will help them succeed in society. Schools, then, provide an apprenticeship in ideology, that is, on-the-job training in ideology. For Althusser, though, this guarantees that students are subject to the state, and ideology "kicks in" as individuals begin to believe the system because they have already been acting in the system.

The final thesis of the "Ideological State Apparatuses" essay is how ideology constitutes subjects. Borrowing from psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, ideology "interpellates" individuals as subjects. People are "hailed" (another term for interpellation) by unconscious ideologies that enlist them as subjects. Interpellation is one's response to a police officer shouting, "Hey you, stop!" What does the police officer's call produce within an individual? The response is retrospective of the call. As Althusser states, "By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him."⁸⁴

With these theses in mind, a basic Althusserian definition of ideology could be, "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."⁸⁵ Althusser's work bridges the gap to later theorists on ideology (e.g., Slovenian cultural theorist, Slavoj Žižek) in that Althusser utilizes Blaise Pascal's argument (found in *Pensées*) that if one wants to believe, one must simply act, and belief will follow. An example may help solidify this idea. An

⁸² Ibid., 152.

⁸³ Ibid., 156.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 163.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 162.

employee believes that working hard could one day benefit the employee, even while the employee becomes fatigued, and the ideology of the system reinforces the work ethic as a “value,” while never calling the system into question. The employee continues to work hard, striving to someday reach that next structural echelon of employment, but the system is never questioned.

With the addition of Althusser’s concept of interpellation, I want to move forward to Hall’s explanation of the expansion of ideology’s production. However, to do justice to the theoretical project of Hall, a few words on Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci are necessary.

Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist, revolutionary, journalist (including editor of the socialist journal *L’Ordine Nuovo*), and cofounder of the Italian Communist Party. In 1926, an assassination attempt was made on Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini’s life. Following this event, Mussolini banned and arrested all dissenting and opposition groups. Gramsci was arrested, although he was not involved in the assassination attempt, and in 1928 he was put on trial, albeit a show trial. Gramsci was imprisoned until his release in 1937. While in Mussolini’s prison (first at Turi and then in a prison hospital at Formia), Gramsci compiled thirty-three handwritten notebooks (totaling 2,848 pages) containing the sketching of his political thought, later published as the *Prison Notebooks* (*Quaderni del carcere*).

Gramsci, although working within the broad paradigm of Marxism, “extensively revised, renovated, and sophisticated” that paradigm.⁸⁶ Gramsci reformulated the reductive Marxist concept of ideology through his detailed work on hegemony, which Hall describes as an

⁸⁶ Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 411.

“immense theoretical revolution.”⁸⁷ First, a brief excursus on how Gramsci broke from orthodox Marxism is needed. Orthodox Marxism posited that humanity—and human will—had little effect on societal change; rather, change came through social and economic processes. The theory of orthodox Marxism is this reductive view that the processes of social change happen independently of human effort. Perhaps more importantly for where Gramsci takes his own work, at the level of practice, orthodox Marxism was built around inaction. As Bruce Grelle noted, “Marxist theory had largely ceased being understood as a guide for action and had become a scholastic exercise remote from concrete political practice.”⁸⁸ Gramsci saw that the historical realities failed to match the orthodox Marxist view; instead, he witnessed revolutions in agrarian Russia—but not in Western Europe.

Gramsci developed a more nuanced view of social change as he was drawn to Marx’s view of praxis. As Gramsci states, “Marx is the creator of a *Weltanschauung*.”⁸⁹ Gramsci’s view of praxis and political change differed from other Marxists, such as Lenin, in that Gramsci did not think the revolutionary political change that succeeded in Russia would succeed in the West. This assessment was due partly to his concept of consent (one way in which hegemony is established in civil society) and how consent manifests itself in a “war of maneuver” and a “war of position” (more on this in chapter 6). Further, for a revolution to succeed, the intellectual “common sense” of the people must be critiqued. Gramsci’s “common sense” refers to uncritical and conformist ways of understanding the world and one’s place within it. Common sense is

⁸⁷ Hall, “‘Ideological Effect’,” 334.

⁸⁸ Bruce Grelle, *Antonio Gramsci and the Question of Religion: Ideology, Ethics, and Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 15.

⁸⁹ Gramsci, *Selections*, 381.

always “an ambiguous, contradictory and multiform concept, and to refer to common sense as a confirmation of truth is nonsense.”⁹⁰ Ultimately, this is all an ideological struggle.

Gramsci differs from Marx and Althusser in that he held that ideology could be a positive influence because it binds a group together (although the group itself can have negative goals). Ideology as a positive influence molds a faction of people into a group through a solidaristic bond. Gramsci differentiates between this positive conceptualization of ideology and a negative conceptualization of ideology. Gramsci’s positive ideology is one that binds historical blocs; the negative ideological conception is one in which ideology returns to ideas that mask exploitation.

Gramsci also breaks from “the austere materialism of Althusser’s account of ideology” in that ideology is “the site of disavowal.”⁹¹ Disavowal is the liminal space between action and thought; within that space, groups can map the ideological view of another group even if “the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if only embryonic. . . . But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual freedom and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group.”⁹²

An important distinction in Gramsci’s ideology is that it cuts across all levels of society. Ideology, then, as it is analyzed in religious discourses, for example, is not merely for the use of the ruling class. These various religious discourses are used within political struggles. This happens with both the “religion of the intellectuals” as well as the “religion of the people.” Within these political struggles is precisely where common sense is dissected.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 423.

⁹¹ Krips, “Ideology and its Pleasures,” 338.

⁹² Gramsci, *Selections*, 327.

Gramsci's ideology "must be analyzed historically, in the terms of the philosophy of praxis, as a superstructure."⁹³ Gramsci's interest was in how ideology moved from a science of ideas to a specific "system of ideas."⁹⁴ Further, Gramsci's nuance is in how he understands the political process. Politics is an ensemble of social relations in which "there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led. The entire science and art of politics are based on this primordial, and (given certain general conditions) irreducible fact."⁹⁵ With that, I want to combine the building blocks of ideology, politics, and consent together into the overarching concept of Gramsci's political theory: hegemony.

Hegemony is the sustaining of political dominance through consent. Therefore, hegemony is always *both* a political development *and* a "politico-practical" concept for Gramsci.⁹⁶ Borrowing from Machiavelli, Gramsci asserts that hegemony is similar to a centaur in that the "half-beast and half-man signifies that a ruler needs to use both natures, and that one without the other is not effective."⁹⁷ Hegemony, in other words, is a *process*, something that must be continuously won and maintained. Hegemony, like ideology, operates at all levels of a society. The goal of hegemonic powers is essentially to convince the oppressed that what is happening is in their best interests. This process of gaining consent is based on the idea that if one controls an individuals' beliefs or loyalties, one controls the person; this control does not always have to be gained violently, although violence may be used as a last resort. Hegemony is created by the political state to maintain its rule and to produce a domination that is not merely attained through force or the implementation of power, although hegemony is always attained

⁹³ Ibid., 376.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 144.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 333.

⁹⁷ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 61.

through both consent *and* coercion. On the coercion side is what Gramsci defines as “politico-military” action.⁹⁸ The normal conditions of political life will not involve military force or violence. There is balance—an “unstable equilibrium”—between consent and coercion.

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony explains political struggle in a way that takes other political movements into account. To elaborate, hegemony does not take place in a vacuum. Consent and coercion happen in the context of competition with other worldviews or value systems in life.

Hegemony is spread and further established in a society through the success of intellectuals and the implementation of consent. In Gramsci’s schema, an organic intellectual—differentiated from a traditional intellectual—is responsible for organizing and leading from within his or her class structure. Organic intellectuals represent the aspirations of their own class. Organic intellectuals, in Gramsci’s impassioned words, *feel* with their class, and “one cannot make politics-history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation.”⁹⁹ There is no “elite” leadership exercised by an organic intellectual, as one maintains one’s role within the class structure. Organic intellectuals ensure that new ideas filter to the masses. These ideas are not forced upon people in a hierarchical, top-down fashion as propaganda; rather, they seep into everyday life as values, language, and culture.

A traditional intellectual, on the other hand, is connected to the previous ruling structure, such as the church, that is now subordinate to the hegemonic ruling class. Teachers and clergy are examples of traditional intellectuals. One final comment about Gramsci’s intellectuals: everyone is an intellectual. The difference is that not everyone uses his or her intellectual skill in society, or, as Gramsci noted, “Because it can happen that everyone at some time fries a couple eggs or sews up a tear in a jacket, we do not necessarily say that everyone is a cook or a

⁹⁸ Gramsci, *Selections*, 107, 183.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 418.

tailor.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, with that undergirding, I will proceed to Hall’s work and how it relates to this dissertation.

Stuart Hall

Hall is the primary cultural studies conversation partner in this dissertation because he is able to articulate a view of culture and ideology that maps well onto the experience of reintegrating Reserve component veterans. Culture is never a neutral site for reflection; rather, culture is where hegemony is constantly fought. Culture is never static. This battleground, so to speak, offers a space for a counterhegemonic force of resistance—or what Hall often refers to as “interventions.” Hall’s biography provides important insights into his emphasis on praxis.

Hall was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1932, as a “colonized subject” to the crown of Great Britain.¹⁰¹ In 1951, he left for Oxford, England, on a Rhodes Scholarship. His life, therefore, was an embodiment of colonialism. He lived in the in-between spaces between the two worlds of colonized and colonizer, never fully belonging to either. He left Jamaica as a subject and went to the heart of the “imperial metropole.”¹⁰² He never returned to Kingston. Following his undergraduate studies at Oxford, he began a PhD on American-British author Henry James. Hall, however, never completed his doctoral work; instead, he became politically active with organizations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

In addition to his political activism, Hall was instrumental in the development of the New Left in Oxford in 1956. The New Left was an amalgamated Communist organization and a group of Oxford University students. The group was able to occupy a liminal space between orthodox Marxist views of society and the failure of ordinary British parliamentary politics. The New Left

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰¹ Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands*, ed. Bill Schwarz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 3.

¹⁰² Ibid., 10.

was *new* in that they broke away from the imperialist politics they understood to be represented by Great Britain's invasion of the Suez and by the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary. Hall and the New Left published the *New Left Review*, which followed methodological commitments of Hall's, that is, it relied on Gramsci, Althusser, and other Marxist theorists. Besides these commitments, Hall began to signal where he would eventually take cultural studies and his reliance on popular culture as a site of struggle within politics. In his first editorial in the *New Left Review* he states:

The purpose of discussing cinema or teen-age culture in NLR [*New Left Review*] is not to show, in some modish way, that we are keeping up with the times. These are directly relevant to the imaginative resistances of people who have to live within capitalism—the growing points of social discontent, the projection of deeply-felt needs. Our experience of life today is so extraordinarily fragmented. The task of socialism today is to meet people where they *are*, where they are touched, bitten, moved, frustrated, nauseated—to develop discontent and, at the same time, to give the socialist moment some *direct* sense of the times in which we live.¹⁰³

Four years later, Hall coauthored *The Popular Arts*, which further cemented his analysis of the “popular.” Also at this time, he accepted an invitation from Richard Hoggart to go to the University of Birmingham, where Hoggart had started the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The CCCS began as a way to understand the relationship between culture, everyday life, and politics and as a response to the erasure of the British working class in post-World War II Great Britain. In the midst of economic growth and prosperity, important aspects of British cultural life lay dormant. Hall notes that the formation of CCCS was not merely an intellectual project, but rather, it was always a political project of “analyzing postwar advanced capitalist culture.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Stuart Hall, “Introducing NLR,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 1 (January-February 1960): 1.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart Hall, “The Formation of Cultural Studies,” in *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 7.

Hoggart, as the first director of the CCCS, sought to note the cultural changes in Great Britain from his background as a literary critic. Coming from the north of England with a predominately working-class familial background and thrust into the university system, Hoggart experienced, firsthand, the university's bifurcated class lines. Hoggart, and other early CCCS theorists, such as Raymond Williams, took his personal experience and argued from it toward a classless society. Therefore, he extolled the elitism of the British academy and the "high" and "low" culture of Great Britain. The early years of the CCCS sought to dismantle the aristocratic literary tradition of the academy. Perhaps equally as relevant as the class consciousness of early theorists of the CCCS, their methodological commitments proved scandalous to the British academy, and what started strictly as a literary critical methodology crept into a sociological analysis of culture. Norma Schulman notes the reception of the CCCS by some British sociologists as a warning in which "if Cultural Studies overstepped its proper limits and took in the study of contemporary society (not just its texts), without 'proper' scientific controls, it would provoke reprisals for illegitimately crossing the territorial boundary."¹⁰⁵

During Hall's tenure as the second director of the CCCS from 1968-1979 (taking over from Hoggart), a new alignment emerged, more important than the one with sociology, which was the implicit and explicit relationship with Marxism. This is where the CCCS and Hall more specifically connect to this literature review's lineage.¹⁰⁶ Hall helpfully situates the *implicit* reliance on Marxism by the Centre in the context of Cold War Britain and a legitimate fear of working with Marx or Marxist analysis. Hall exegetes sections from Raymond Williams's early

¹⁰⁵ Norma Schulman, "Conditions of their Own Making: An Intellectual History of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 18, no. 1 (1993): 2.

¹⁰⁶ In 1979, Hall left the CCCS to become Professor of Sociology at the Open University, where he stayed until his retirement in 1997. The Open University, established in 1969, sought to provide high-quality education that is flexible and provided at a distance. The Open University recorded lectures on cassette tapes and video-recorded them on VHS tapes in conjunction with the BBC.

texts to show how, for example, when Williams refers to the “system of economic life,” or “the system of economic organization” he is referring to Marx’s “mode of production.”¹⁰⁷ Hall found that the Marxist ideas that influenced the majority of his contemporary intellectual conversations were the same Marx-Engels principle mentioned above and an overall reductive reliance on Marx’s base and superstructure concept.

Hall, however, through his reading of Gramsci, was able to usher in a new methodological analysis more amenable to Marxist theory. In particular, Hall was interested in how cultural production manifests a working-class struggle to express itself within the confines of oppression (or what Hall repeatedly refers to as “sites of resistance”). Key insights from Gramsci, especially the practices of hegemony (consent, common sense, and the role of the intellectual) come up constantly in Hall’s work. Gramsci, for Hall, signaled a way to utilize Marxist social analysis while discarding the rigid base-superstructure metaphor. Hall’s ideology—and in particular, the ideological struggle—is more reminiscent of Gramsci’s hegemony. Hall’s work (and that of the CCCS overall), though, is more accessible when compared to the work of The Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*) or, more colloquially, the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory.

The Frankfurt School, in the aftermath of World War I, and through funding by Hermann Weil, began as a study group at the University of Frankfurt in 1923. This quasi-Marxist think tank focused on early Marxist ideas of culture and estrangement. Although the group lost momentum in the late 1920s, it began anew in 1930 under the direction of Max Horkheimer. The first generation of Frankfurt School theorists included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and (loosely) Walter Benjamin.

¹⁰⁷ Hall, “The Formation of Cultural Studies,” 21.

Max Horkheimer coined the term *critical theory* in a 1937 journal article differentiating theories of science from theories of culture. The difference, for Horkheimer, is that since knowledge is contextually determined and meaning is created within cultures, the scientific method of objectively gaining knowledge is not useful in theories of culture. Meaning is created in cultures and contexts. Theologian Graham Ward develops this idea further, saying that “knowledge in the human sciences is sociologically conditioned and needs to reflect upon its own determinates.”¹⁰⁸

For this dissertation, I am interested in how the Frankfurt School conceptualized culture and mass media. More specifically, I am interested in moving away from the Frankfurt School toward Hall’s work within the CCCS, as his conception of media production and how a counterhegemonic group can oppositionally “read” and resist texts is more useful (and optimistic). Adorno and Horkheimer understand media production through the lens of “the culture industry,” in that “the whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry.”¹⁰⁹ The filter of the culture industry, for this dissertation, would include the entire system of capitalism undergirding the military-industrial complex. My critique of the Frankfurt School model is that it does not offer an analysis of how meaning is also inscribed at the level of reception—rather than merely at the level of production.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Graham Ward, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), xiii.

¹⁰⁹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 99.

¹¹⁰ Walter Benjamin was the one (quasi) Frankfurt School theorist who arrived at a more optimistic view of media. In his essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Benjamin posits that each new medium develops a new viewer who is able to critique the medium and have a formative opinion on its products. As the “aura of the work of art” (what he also refers to as its “authenticity”) is reduced under the pressures of “mechanical reproduction,” viewers can engage and discriminate between high and low culture. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 221.

As I already briefly noted, Hall's autobiographical work tapped into his views on ideology, race, and the legacy of British colonialism through his consistent leveling of theoretical work to his own lived experience. Throughout his work, Hall discusses what it personally meant to be hailed (Althusser's *interpellation*) as "black" in Jamaica and what it meant to be hailed as "black" in England. According to Hall, each instance of being hailed "inscribes me 'in place' in a signifying chain which constructs identity through the categories of color, ethnicity, race."¹¹¹ To be "colored" in Jamaica was to be, in effect, hailed as *not* black (and something on the continuum of the "middle ranks of the brown middle class"); while to be "colored" in England meant being hailed as *not* white.¹¹² The discourse of race had an "ascending scale" for place.¹¹³ This ascending scale even held power within Hall's own family. He describes a family narrative of his sister looking into his crib and remarking, "Where did you get this Coolie baby from?"¹¹⁴ Coolies were East Indians brought into Jamaica after the abolition of slavery to fill the roles of servitude. Therefore, a Coolie was "a rung lower in the discourse of race than 'black.'"¹¹⁵ None of these single interpellations ontologically represented Hall as a human being.

Returning to culture as a pivot toward chapter 3, it is Hall's view of culture, contra Marx's, which guides this dissertation. Culture is active and represents a formative role within society. Culture is able to do this *through* mass media. Politics reside within culture, and those texts that are inscribed with meaning are media texts. Media, similar to Althusser's ideas, interpellates subjects with a view that subjects are able to freely choose their conditions. Marx would say that it is economics—the base—that determines the media. However, for Hall, the base and superstructure have circuitry between them. Therefore, Hall and other New Left

¹¹¹ Hall, "Ideology and Ideological Struggle," 146.

¹¹² Ibid, 147.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 149.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

intellectuals argue that culture can also work to influence and determine economics. The superstructure can determine the base, to use Marx's language.

Implications for Practical Theology and This Project

There are clear advantages to utilizing ideology critique as a conversation partner for military chaplains and practical theologians providing moral injury support. The conceptualization of moral injury support that I am proposing directly confronts the ideological mythologizing of American military service. A dominant ideological view of service members is braided into the media we consume. Ideological images, whether in film or celebrated at sporting events, produce people's understandings of military service (and of war). Hall's theorizing of ideology shows that resistance to hegemonic forces *is* possible, and military chaplains and practical theologians are needed to stand in solidarity with counterhegemonic forces. The significance of utilizing ideology critique (from Hall's cultural studies) as a conversation partner is that culture and media directly impact how veterans' understand their deployment experience. Practical theology is, if nothing else, committed to meeting people where they are. Part of this commitment is a critical engagement with social structures and how these structures impact individuals. Therefore, as Miller-McLemore suggests, practical theology is situated to support the "living human document within the web."¹¹⁶

Through this literature review's theorizing, ideology critique is able to take the chaplain part of the way towards enacting practices of support. That journey of cognition provides ample explanation for ways in which ideology is produced. However, what is missing, and what spiritual care and counseling is uniquely capable of providing, is an understanding of the role of emotion and affect in the power of ideology.

¹¹⁶ Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 51.

Earlier, in the moral injury section of this chapter, I discussed the affects within moral injury symptomology, as proffered by Jinkerson. To recap, core moral injury symptomology includes guilt, shame, spiritual or existential conflict (including “subjective loss of meaning in life”), and a “loss of trust in self, others, and a transcendent or divine entity.”¹¹⁷ At a secondary level, Jinkerson notes the presence of depression, anxiety, anger, a re-experiencing of the moral conflict, self-harm, and social problems.¹¹⁸ Now that this literature review has discussed both moral injury and ideology critique it is clearer how moral injury has an affective ideological element connected to it. The worldview of the military, utilizing Moon’s “moral orienting system,” is one in which a dominant ideology is produced. Army recruits are inculcated into that ideology through the seven army values: leadership, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. When, for example, an organizational MIE takes place, a service member is doubly affected because he or she has also failed to live up to the standards of camaraderie. Any treatment intervention that does not include a mechanism for exploring how the ideology of the military impacts the integration of a moral injury is destined to be short-lived. Later in this dissertation I will unpack an alternative framework for the reintegration of veterans with moral injuries within ideological matrices.

Further, it is not only veterans who are affected by dominant ideologies. This dissertation critiques how ideology impacts a veteran’s return and how this is atomized into the daily interactions between veterans and civilians. On the one hand, it is true that “thank you for your service” has become the constitutive statement of American civic religion. For some, then, merely reciting this phrase is enough to fulfill one’s civic duty. However, on the other hand, there are civilians desperately looking for ways to support veterans in their communities. Part of

¹¹⁷ Jinkerson, “Defining and Assessing Moral Injury,” 126.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

the benefit of encouraging veterans to re-author the stories of their MIEs and to share these morally injurious narratives is that civilians will also learn “how American values, logic, and practices regarding suffering and self-sacrifice lie hidden beneath the surface of moral injury.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Kelly Denton-Borhaug, “Like Acid Seeping into Your Soul: Religio-Cultural Violence in Moral Injury,” in *Exploring Moral Injury in Sacred Texts*, ed. Joseph McDonald (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017), 119.

Chapter 3

Methods and Methodology

It is a fact that the one and only thing that can maintain the liberative character of any theology is not its content but its methodology. It is the latter that guarantees the continuing bite of theology, whatever terminology may be used and however much the existing system tries to reabsorb it into itself. It is the methodology that ensures that the existing system will continue to look like an oppressor on the horizon of theology itself; that offers the best hope for the future of theology.¹

— Juan Luis Segundo

The methodological approaches that guide this dissertation are threefold: first, a practical theology hermeneutical method of liberative praxis (strengthened with a revised praxis method of correlation); second, the qualitative methodology of case study; and finally, pastoral counseling practices within narrative therapy. To articulate a liberative praxis method, I will trace how Juan Luis Segundo's method of a liberative hermeneutical circle is a complementary way of employing hermeneutics when compared with the hermeneutical circle proffered by Hans-Georg Gadamer (and utilized by American practical theologian Don Browning) and, in particular, when combined with pastoral and practical theologian Emmanuel Lartey's liberative praxis.

Building on Segundo's method, I argue that the use of case study as a qualitative methodology is tenable within this strand of practical and pastoral theology and liberative praxis. To this, pastoral and practical theologian Daniel Schipani states, "The case study method is inherently analogous to the structure of practical theology with its descriptive, interpretive,

¹ Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 39-40.

normative, and pragmatic-strategic tasks and dimensions.”² Finally, I describe how narrative therapy informed this dissertation’s interview process, which becomes all the more integral to this work in chapter 6, where I provide constructive proposals. With that, I want to now trace and develop my practical theological method.

Liberative Praxis

The four tasks of practical theology assist in identifying frustrations with first-generation moral injury research. Although he is known for his systematizing of these tasks, American practical theologian Richard Osmer states, “I make no claim to originality in my description of these tasks. While the terms may differ, something like each of them is taught in clinical pastoral education, doctor of ministry courses, and courses on preaching, pastoral care, administration, Christian education, and evangelism in schools of theology.”³ Osmer designates the four tasks as follows: the “descriptive-empirical,” the “interpretive,” the “normative,” and the “pragmatic.”⁴ In the first task, the practical theologian is seeking information to discern what is going on. In the interpretative task, in conjunction with interdisciplinary conversation partners, the practical theologian explores and explains what is going on. In this dissertation, I am particularly exploring *why* society has failed to reintegrate Reserve and National Guard veterans.

The remaining two tasks are what provide practical theology with its significance—and what I argue are missing in moral injury research, and therefore, they are upheld in this dissertation. Moving into the normative task, the researcher’s interpretive focus turns to the episodes, situations, and contexts in dialogue with theological texts and begins to develop—and co-construct—practices in response. Osmer’s hermeneutical circle is located in incidents (what

² Daniel Schipani, “Case Study Method,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 100.

³ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

⁴ Ibid.

he refers to as “episodes”) within patterns and relationships (“situations”) and within an understanding of the overall systemic implications of the particular event (“context”). These practices are normative as they are generated from the context in question. Further, within this task, the practical theologian names personal norms, choices, and preferences that he or she privileges in providing care. With the pragmatic task, the question is how to move forward faithfully and in connection to the context that precipitated the inquiry.

As I detailed in chapter 2, much of moral injury research addresses Osmer’s first two tasks of practical theology as clinicians, theologians, ethicists, and others situate and differentiate moral injury from other combat phenomena (most notably, PTSD). The hermeneutical task is quite useful, and research from clinical psychologists is helping shape our collective understanding of why MIEs impact certain individuals. However, I leave moral injury research wanting to know *more* about how I, as a chaplain, can pragmatically provide care to veterans suffering from such injuries. There has been work from the psychotherapeutic perspective on treating MIEs—most notably AD and AD-E—but this ultimately does not assist chaplains (who do not have psychotherapeutic training or additional behavioral health training) in providing competent spiritual care.

Further still, from a liberation theology perspective, unless the system that undergirds these phenomena is critiqued, there is little reason to believe that MIEs will decrease, as ambiguous military conflicts will continue to take place. Segundo speaks to the consequences of an unwillingness to critique systems: “Theology will become and remain the unwitting spokesman of the experiences and ideas of the ruling factions and classes.”⁵ To prevent becoming an “unwitting spokesman” of the ruling classes, spiritual caregivers need to adopt a liberative praxis method of practical theology. Liberative praxis provides caregivers both a

⁵ Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 39.

framework to provide competent and clinically astute care to individuals, and it provides this care within a broader understanding and critique of how systems of oppression subjugate individuals. To make this argument more completely, I want to offer first a description of the development of practical theology toward a liberative praxis and, in particular, emphasize the hermeneutical circle employed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (and practical theologian Don Browning), Juan Luis Segundo, and Emmanuel Lartey.

My goal is to unpack in three parts what is going on in my practical theological method: First, I trace the hermeneutical circle via an analysis of Gadamer and Browning's use of Gadamer. Second, I add Segundo's hermeneutical circle outlined in *Liberation of Theology* as a preferred usage of the hermeneutical circle. Third, and finally, I offer pastoral and practical theologian Emmanuel Lartey's liberative praxis method as a way to enter the qualitative methodological work of this dissertation.

Hermeneutical Circles: Hans-Georg Gadamer and Juan Luis Segundo

Gadamer revolutionized the way hermeneutics operates as he ushered hermeneutics away from a rationalism steeped in Enlightenment objectivity. Importantly, Gadamer's hermeneutical circle helped erase the subjective and objective divide. Gadamer was able to achieve this by employing Martin Heidegger's *Dasein* (there-being) and by moving beyond the hermeneutical starting point identified by "the father of phenomenology," Edmund Husserl. Gadamer, with his hermeneutical circle, argues, like Heidegger, that "understanding and interpretation are *provisional, historical, and temporal*, resting on *pre-understanding* unavoidably."⁶ Gadamer's concept of pre-understanding is key to his method and to its movement away from Enlightenment objectivity; for him, there is no unbiased point of interpretation.

⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 209. Emphasis in original.

The Enlightenment model of objectivity sought to bracket out all “preunderstandings” that might compromise the objectivity of a study. In a poignant critique of the Enlightenment model, Browning states, “The past does not just die and exist as a frozen corpse totally inert, impotent, and unable to shape present events. The present is largely a product of the past. The past lives in the present whether we realize it or not.”⁷ Gadamer’s revolutionary idea was to begin his hermeneutical circle with preunderstandings. He asserted that all interpretation comes from the past; therefore, one cannot bracket the past, or preunderstandings, out of one’s interpretation and study. Gadamer elaborated, saying, “*The prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.*”⁸ The point is to acknowledge, then, how preunderstandings motivate the researcher. Browning calls this using “our prejudices and commitments in the understanding process.”⁹

Gadamer’s hermeneutical circle only begins with preunderstandings, instead of using them to reach a conclusion. Moving from preunderstanding, the circle next encounters “the experience of being brought up short.”¹⁰ In this stage, one reaches the limits of one’s experiences, and this calls into question one’s preunderstandings. Next is Gadamer’s “dialogical interplay.” Interpretation is a dialogue between subjects, between a subject and a text, or between a subject and an object. For our “horizons” to expand, we must listen to new voices. Following the dialogical synthesis, a “fusion of horizons” is reached. Finally, and this is crucial not only for qualitative research, but also for practical theology and Browning’s use of Gadamer, there is “application.” Interpreters are able to go back into their contexts with new manners of thinking and operating in the world.

⁷ Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology*, 41.

⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1975), 278.

⁹ Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology*, 38.

¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 310-325.

From this Gadamerian foundation to the hermeneutical circle, I now want to provide a methodological mapping of Juan Luis Segundo's *Liberation of Theology*. Segundo's hermeneutical circle directly influenced Latin American liberation theology. Further, from these influences come the spiritual care and counseling practices that offer solidarity to veterans.

Segundo, a Uruguayan Jesuit priest, was a forerunner of Latin American liberation theology in the late 1960s. For this genealogy, I am going to mark the beginning of Latin American liberation theology as a discipline with the 1968 Second Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellín, Colombia. Around the same time, Black liberation theology was emerging in the United States. The political and social consciousness generated from the civil rights movement and the assassinations of Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 provided significant momentum in solidifying a constructive Black liberation theology. In other words, the stage was already set to develop a theology that speaks to communities of the oppressed. For example, in the academy, James Cone's 1969 *Black Theology and Black Power* brought to the fore the emerging theme of black power, which was already emerging as a motif in the black community with the activism of such individuals as Stokely Carmichael. What emerged in the academy first gained traction in the community. In 1970, Cone published *A Black Theology of Liberation*, further cementing the hermeneutical and systematic treatment of liberation in theology.

For Latin American liberation theology, broadly speaking, a primary goal of ministry and theological reflection is solidarity with the oppressed, a recognition of God's preferential option for the poor and marginalized, and a transformation of oppressive systems. To meet that goal, Latin American liberation theologians, including Segundo, employ a Marxist praxis. As I emphasized in chapter 2, to truly understand praxis from a Marxist perspective, one must

understand that it is never merely a reflection on practice; it must involve change, or “revolution.” This happens through a dialectic of practice, reflection on practice, and the synthesis of praxis. The material interests of the ruling class drive society, and therefore, these interests determine how social relations function. To be emancipated from this situation, the goal is not to engage abstractly with the ruling class but to struggle for change through an elevated self-consciousness. In other words, the goal is not *orthodoxy* (right belief); rather, the goal is an *orthopraxis* of changed behavior. Therefore, as Marx himself stated, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point is to change it.”¹¹ Remembering this purpose of Marxist analysis can help us unpack the meaning of Segundo’s hermeneutical circle.

Segundo begins *Liberation of Theology* by arguing that some theological institutions (for him, the Roman Catholic Church) merely appropriate liberation theology terminology, such as *liberation*; these institutions may appropriate *liberation* as content, but they fail when one interrogates their methods. As the epigraphic quote that began this chapter states, “It is the methodology that ensures that the existing system will continue to look like an oppressor on the horizon of theology itself; that offers the best hope for the future of theology.”¹²

Segundo’s hermeneutical circle is “the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal.”¹³ It is a circle of interpretation as each new piece of data (a part) forces us to reinterpret the tradition (the whole). Importantly for Segundo, and for this dissertation, is that the methodology he envisions is a revised praxis method of correlation, which is based on Segundo’s concept that a priori to the hermeneutical circle is the understanding that sacred texts and traditions can and must be changed through fresh interpretations based in problems and life

¹¹ Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 145.

¹² Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

experiences. Any theology that refuses to change in this hermeneutical way is “conservative” in the sense that “it lacks any *here-and-now* criteria for judging our real situation.”¹⁴

Segundo’s hermeneutical circle has four elements. The first is that there is a hermeneutic of suspicion in the way we understand reality. This hermeneutic of suspicion is built upon two preconditions. The first precondition is that the questions rising from lived experience are existential and speak to actual lived experience because those are the questions that one can bring to theology. The second precondition is embedded within a revised praxis method of correlation. Segundo is adamant that if theology responds to lived experience without changing preexisting interpretations then “that immediately terminates the hermeneutic circle.”¹⁵ New questions emerging from lived experience demand that theology take them seriously and not rely on former ways of understanding. It is necessary to go back to our religious resources and reinterpret, mold, and fashion a response.

The second element is that suspicions are interrogated through our “ideological superstructure” and theology.¹⁶ The ideological superstructures are in place to make sense of marginalization, oppression, and subjugation. Segundo’s second element gets close to resembling a Marxist ideology critique: the place of ideological superstructures is to “unmask the reality of oppression.”¹⁷ Third, the ideological suspicion morphs into an exegetical suspicion of how the sacred texts have been interpreted. What has been missing in interpretation? How can the sacred texts morph to encompass these new concerns? Finally, one emerges from exegetical suspicion with a renewed interpretation of both the experience and the sacred text.

¹⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 27.

For a method that Segundo states needs to have common sense and not reside solely in the academy, his elements are arduous, so I want to offer one of his own examples as a means of unpacking his steps. Segundo offers four examples, but it is his fourth example, James Cone's *A Black Theology of Liberation*, that remains the example par excellence of his fourfold hermeneutical circle. First, Cone's text starts with his own personal experience. There is no need for the researcher or theologian to avoid "partiality."¹⁸ One cannot block out one's history; here, Segundo's hermeneutic is still in line with Heidegger and Gadamer. Cone's partiality is evident in his explication of God's ontological solidarity with the black community. God is with the oppressed, because God *is* oppressed. Cone is responsible to the black community; he is not concerned with white theology or its interpretation.

For Segundo's second stage, suspicions are interrogated via our "ideological superstructure" and theology; thus, Cone interrogates the racism and white supremacy of the United States. Even more specifically, Cone critiques the "color-blind" theology of white supremacy.¹⁹ Since Cone started from his own partiality, he has no need for a colorless God or a theological system that espouses a colorless God; a colorless God is merely the oppressor failing to take the cause of racism into account. Segundo's third stage, a new exegetical suspicion, works to unmask the racism in theology and to offer new theological accounts. Cone does this with a continued reliance on the Exodus narrative in the Hebrew Scriptures. Cone arrives at the fourth stage, a new interpretation of the tradition or sacred texts, by stating that God is with the oppressed through the event of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ is not "confined to the first century, and thus our talk of him in the past is important only insofar as it

¹⁸ Ibid., 25-26.

¹⁹ Ibid., 28.

leads us to an *encounter* with him *now*. . . I want to know what God's revelation means right now as the black community participates in the struggle for liberation."²⁰

If I could condense Segundo's hermeneutical circle down to one word, I would decidedly define it as *orthopraxis*—especially over and against orthodoxy. Segundo's hermeneutical circle comes to some semblance of truth only through practice and commitment. On this point, Segundo states, "The truth is truth only when it serves as the basis for truly human attitudes."²¹ Borrowing from Cone, Segundo suggests that orthodoxy is in service to orthopraxis. Truth emerges when it serves human needs. It is only through orthopraxis that theology can retain its revolutionary call. Otherwise, "Theology will become and remain the unwitting spokesman of the experiences and ideas of the ruling factions and classes."²²

A liberative methodology begins with commitment and then moves to theology. Segundo is reliant on what he understands as Jesus's own methodology, which was focused primarily on the human condition, and on committing himself to that task. Segundo notes that Jesus's primary concern was bringing "remedy to some sort of human suffering."²³ It was the Pharisees, Segundo asserts, who begin with theology.

I want to discuss Segundo's use of ideology, especially as it directly relates to this dissertation. How does Segundo's liberation theology relate to ideology critique? First, and most importantly, Segundo does not follow the negative conception of ideology as the distorted ideas that mask the real conditions of a system and that work to benefit those in power. Segundo, in the midst of a text that is properly situated as political, fails to maintain and uphold the political dimension of ideology. Rather, he attempts a "re-ideologization" in which ideology is "the

²⁰ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 31. Emphasis in the original.

²¹ Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 32.

²² *Ibid.*, 39.

²³ *Ibid.*, 79.

system of goals and means that serves as the necessary backdrop for any human option or line of action,” and “a logical system of interconnected values.”²⁴ There is a sense in Segundo’s work that ideology is efficacious; it provides the undergirding for action. This means, clearly, that ideology can be constituted as a positive or as a negative force. It is at this point that Segundo introduces “faith.” Faith is the “total process to which man submits, a process of learning in and through ideologies how to create the ideologies needed to handle new and unforeseen situations in history.”²⁵ For Segundo, faith and ideology need each other; there is a unifying dimension in their relationship, and they are linked to bring about liberation for the marginalized and oppressed. Ideology, for Segundo, is the way in which oppressed communities move toward actualizing their emancipation.

Segundo, unlike the ideology critique theorists detailed in chapter 2, is not arguing to unmask ideology, but rather to find strategic ways to maximize one’s faith to create new ideologies that move people toward emancipation. Segundo seeks to use ideology *better*. Faith represents the “permanent and the unique” while ideologies represent “different historical circumstances.”²⁶ Said differently, faith aligns with an ideology that is better positioned to operationalize the tasks of emancipating marginalized communities. According to Segundo:

Faith then is not a universal and atemporal pithy body of content summing up divine revelation once it has been divested of ideologies. On the contrary, it is maturity by way of ideologies; the possibility of fully and conscientiously carrying out the ideological task on which the real-life liberation of human beings depends.²⁷

My primary cognate interlocutor from chapter 2, Hall, is a perfect supplementary conversation partner for Segundo, and this directly relates to Segundo’s method. Hall’s

²⁴ Ibid., 116, 102, 105.

²⁵ Ibid., 120.

²⁶ Ibid., 116.

²⁷ Ibid., 122.

“hypothetical” reading of ideological texts (which I explore in much greater detail in chapter 5) provides an analysis of ideology critique that can offer liberation theology the critical impetus necessary to have a more holistic critical theory of systems of oppression. Without acknowledging ideology’s power, especially in the hands of hegemonic power structures, theology does a disservice to the communities it claims to represent. A political awareness of ideology is necessary to maintain a realistic vision of how hegemony is continuing to maintain power and oppress those on the margins. Segundo’s refusal to hold a view of ideology that recognizes its production by hegemonic powers becomes the very barrier to emancipation for marginalized communities. So, while Segundo offers a hermeneutical circle that is committed to the margins and the oppressed, it fails at recognizing the actual dominating forces of ideology. Some of these concerns are addressed in Lartey’s intercultural model of liberative praxis, to which I now turn.

Emmanuel Lartey’s Liberative Praxis

For this dissertation, I am understanding practical theology as an enterprise that privileges the lived experiences of Reserve and National Guard veterans with moral injuries who are reintegrating into society. As the last section on the hermeneutical circle showed, my understanding of a preferred spiritual care paradigm is grounded within practical and pastoral theology’s hermeneutical approach. Ultimately, my liberative praxis seeks to privilege those on the margins of systems. My interpretive lens within practical and pastoral theology is what allows me to conceptualize the implicit complications of a US ideology of military service that cannot create space for reintegration. One conversation partner that provides a spiritual care understanding of praxis is Emmanuel Y. Lartey, currently the L. Bevel Jones III Professor of Pastoral Theology, Care, and Counseling at Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

Lartey's work expands the intercultural perspective while adapting the traditional hermeneutical circle of action–reflection–action or see–judge–act, and he offers a five-stage liberative method for practical theology. His method moves through concrete experience, situational analysis, faith perspectives, interrogation of the situation, and response; this process can be entered at any phase.²⁸

Lartey starts with concrete experience. An intercultural approach to a liberative praxis must be “inductive, collective, and inclusive.”²⁹ Caregivers are compelled to engage with a local community, thereby avoiding overgeneralizations about the community. In the context of moral injury, this once again privileges the story of the veteran. The stage of concrete experience allows for real encounters with actual people. From that starting point, Lartey advocates a next step of situational analysis. In this step, the workings are those of a revised praxis method of correlation, as they invite a reciprocal critique of the situation from other disciplines. Lartey acknowledges the limits of this step, and therefore gives a perspectival view, but he insists that a “collective seeing,” a comparing of visions, is critical.³⁰ His third step, a theological analysis of various faith perspectives, allows for religious traditions to have a say, both in questioning and in responding to concrete experiences and concerns. Faith traditions are challenged and critiqued in Lartey's method. In the fourth phase, interrogation of the situation, faith traditions are pushed to answer the questions that arise from the concrete experiences. In other words, the pragmatic and normative tasks of Osmer's practical theology are highlighted. Finally, the responses are considered, and new practices are enacted.

²⁸ Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 2nd ed. (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003), 131-133.

²⁹ Ibid., 125.

³⁰ Ibid., 132-133.

This dissertation utilizes practical theology to understand how Reserve and National Guard veterans in different locations and under divergent societal circumstances make meaning from their moral injuries and, further, how meaning-making is shaped by dominant ideologies. This starting point relies on the hermeneutical task of studying what Miller-McLemore calls the “living human web.” The concept of humans existing within webs compels me to develop a thick description of my research participant, which I do in chapter 4. To properly reintegrate and care for returning Reserve component veterans, this thick description must reckon with broader religious, social, and cultural implications. With that said, to meet this commitment, in this dissertation I employ a case study methodology to more fully understand the experience of a returning veteran.

Case Study

The method of qualitative inquiry for this study is case study. Employing case study as my qualitative methodology is useful in this dissertation as it provides the opportunity to reflect deeply and critically on the essence of reintegrating with an MIE within a Reserve or National Guard context. Case study provides the rich particularity of one individual’s story while also highlighting the complexity of the interdependency of various influences. Case study provides “a powerful and complex form of knowing, rooted in context and interpretation. The potential troubles with cases cannot be eliminated, yet people of faith and a suffering world urgently need the practical wisdom afforded by cases.”³¹

Further, case study is most appropriate for this dissertation in that I am not attempting to generate a theory from a participant’s experiences of reintegration with a moral injury within a reserve context (i.e., grounded theory). I am also not attempting to analyze the “essence” of the

³¹ Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, “The Power and Danger of a Single Case Study in Practical Theological Research,” in *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, ed. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Boston: Brill, 2016), 54.

returning veteran's experience (i.e., phenomenology); rather, case study affords me the opportunity to excavate a specific case at a deeper level. Through this in-depth level of analysis, I was able to learn how a dominant ideology functioned for my participant's reintegration.

This methodology, as I will show, still allows for transferability and for producing constructive care proposals because, although I am mining one particular case, this case study holds commonalities with other cases. Simply put, a case study is an "organized and systematic way of studying and reporting various aspects of a person, family, group, or situation using a predetermined outline of questions or subjects."³² Case study has an illustrious history in the social sciences, as well as a notable history within pastoral theology, specifically in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) movement that began with Anton Boisen's reliance on case study.³³

Anton Boisen and the Pastoral Development of Case Study

Anton Boisen is credited as the founder of CPE, an educational program in which theological students or ministers are placed in a professionalized setting and receive training through supervision and small group reflections. Most of the learning, however, takes place through doing pastoral care in the various contexts of the program. Boisen's passion for this model came as a result of his own dissatisfaction as a psychiatric patient. Throughout his vulnerably written, memoir-like text (arguably his own case study), *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience*, Boisen discusses what it was like to be hospitalized and his experience of what he describes as "disturbances."³⁴ Much of what he

³² Glen H. Asquith, "Case Study Method," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 123.

³³ Stalwarts in pastoral theology, Seward Hiltner and Wayne Oates both used case study methods. Hiltner studies "Ichabod Spencer" in his influential *Preface to Pastoral Theology: The Ministry and Theory of Shepherding* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958). Oates, similarly, uses case study as a way to understand mental health and spirituality in *When Religion Gets Sick* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1970).

³⁴ Anton T. Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936).

saw around him was the result of spiritual difficulties, and the medical system at that time was not able to address these concerns clinically.

Boisen's observations are critical. His thesis centers on a patient's "insanity" coming from one of two sources: either "organic trouble" (what Boisen understood as a brain defect) or a "disorganization" of the patient's world.³⁵ These existential disorganizations were not treated properly because they were not treated spiritually. At this time, hospital chaplains—as we understand the role today—were not common. Boisen describes his second disturbance as occurring after listening to a civilian pastor lead chapel services. Such pastors, Boisen comments, "certainly knew nothing about our problems."³⁶ Their ministry was limited to the hour or so that they provided a service; they were not permitted to visit the patients.

In 1922, Boisen began to work alongside Harvard University physician and ethicist Dr. Richard Cabot, who introduced him to the case study method. The case study methodology is arguably Dr. Cabot's greatest influence on Boisen. It was Cabot's published medical work (not necessarily his social ethical work), in which he and other medical students worked through case study material to emphasize differential diagnoses for different patients, that impressed Boisen. He understood that it was through the study of a living human document that one could make a diagnosis.

With Dr. Cabot, Boisen put together an experimental plan for a chaplain training program. The students in this program worked *in* the hospital and had access to the patient's medical records. Access to medical records, what he referred to as "first-hand sources," was non-negotiable for Boisen; to do this work well, a student needed to know the full case history of a

³⁵ Ibid., 10-11.

³⁶ Ibid., 6.

care receiver.³⁷ The medical records represented the case study for review. Boisen states, “I wanted them to learn to read human documents as well as books, particularly those revealing documents which are opened up at the inner day of judgment.”³⁸ Case study and the subsequently added verbatims are now staples of modern CPE curricula and experiences.

What I think is often missed with Boisen is that he was interested in sociocultural situatedness. He states that the study of the “living human document” is always in conjunction with “actual social locations in all their complexity,” and therefore it is these two together that provide the foundation of Boisen’s method.³⁹ For him, human experience needs to be read in the same manner, and with the same rigor, as classical biblical texts. Building on this, “We have sought to determine the origin and meaning of these beliefs, their function in the individual’s life, and their implications for a general system of values.”⁴⁰ To take this seriously, Boisen elaborated on the case study methodology.

Pastoral theologian Charles V. Gerkin took Boisen’s living human document idea and added the hermeneutical import that the field of pastoral theology associates with the phrase now. Gerkin understood that pastoral counselors “are more than anything else, listeners to, and interpreters of stories.”⁴¹ Stories matter, and language is how we construct meaning. Not only the elements contained within a story, but also the interpretation and re-speaking of a story by a pastoral counselor hold the possibility of providing healing. Gerkin encouraged pastoral counselors to approach people’s stories as a “stranger.” Gerkin stated, “To listen to stories with an effort to understand means to listen first as a stranger who does not yet fully know the

³⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 185.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 306.

⁴¹ Charles V. Gerkin, *The Living Human Document: Re-Visioning Pastoral Counseling in a Hermeneutical Mode* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 26.

language, the nuanced meanings of the other as his or her story is being told.”⁴² The capacity to understand another person is, for Gerkin, a hermeneutical ability. An important element of Gerkin’s thought is that this hermeneutical process is an intersubjective task. The mutuality that is present between a caregiver and a care receiver is the result of the melding of two living human documents who have interpreted one another and made meaning together.

Both Boisen and Gerkin provide invaluable additions to the field of pastoral theology and the method of case study. They provide a voice advocating for the marginalized and oppressed. However, although Boisen in particular addresses sociocultural concerns, the concept of a living human document remains too narrow and fails to fully conceptualize social and political implications for both care providers and care receivers. Pastoral theologian Glen Asquith remarks that Boisen’s legacy “may well be the insight that one must take the time and discipline to ask the right questions in order to obtain a more complete theological perspective on human situations.”⁴³ Boisen was able to achieve a milestone: access to patients and their records. Yet this leads to empiricism and an inherent hierarchy between a theological student and a patient. It is within this trajectory that Miller-McLemore’s living human web, which I addressed in chapter 1, becomes helpful.

To recap, Miller-McLemore’s concept of the living human web takes seriously the concerns of marginalized communities, and it moves away from the narrowly defined “living human document” to a broader, more critical focus on the contextual aspects of care. Her conceptual contribution to the practical theology field focuses on the embeddedness of persons in various public webs of meaning. Importantly, Miller-McLemore is not advocating the complete erasure of the living human document as an image by which to understand care; rather, she has a

⁴² Ibid., 27.

⁴³ Glenn H. Asquith, “The Case Study Method of Anton T. Boisen,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 34, no. 2 (June 1980): 94.

broader conceptualization of care that takes the holistic approach of putting many multifaceted systemic realities into play. “Ultimately,” she says, “I suggest that ‘the living human document within the web’ is the metaphor that best captures the subject matter of both CPE and pastoral theology.”⁴⁴

George Fitchett, a healthcare chaplain researcher, details what a thorough case study offers. For Fitchett, case study research is an important development in chaplain research as it professionalizes healthcare chaplaincy and places it on a research level more on par with interdisciplinary partners. The same argument can be made for military chaplains: improving our research capabilities only enhances the chaplain corps as a “force multiplier” (as defined in chapter 1). Returning to Fitchett, he lists seven steps a “good” healthcare case study needs. Of that list I want to highlight one step: “make a point or tell a story.”⁴⁵ The other steps have little to do with this dissertation, and many of them (e.g., “makes our case with cases”) are similar to my qualitative methodological commitments (detailed below).⁴⁶

A good case study plays “a central role in developing the foundations for research about the effects of chaplains’ spiritual care. . . . Every chaplain can play an important role in that process, not by conducting RCTs [randomized controlled trials] or other quantitative research, but by writing case studies about the work they do every day.”⁴⁷ A case study is written as a point of reference to assist chaplains. In this dissertation, however, and in my usage of case study, I am more interested in how my participant’s story sheds light back on society. With that, I want to analyze the qualitative methodology of case study as it develops, morphs, and sharpens as methodology.

⁴⁴ Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 51.

⁴⁵ George Fitchett, “Making Our Case(s),” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 17, no. 1-2 (April 25, 2011): 12.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 15, 16.

Qualitative Methodology of Case Study

Case study is a bounded study of an object (a phenomena or phenomenon), rather than a process. The case is bounded to signify that the bounded system has a “boundary and working parts. . . [It] is likely to be purposive, even having a ‘self.’”⁴⁸ For an “intrinsic case study,” what is studied *is* the case; in other words, the researcher is not attempting to learn more about similar cases, or similar individuals. The interest in the case is intrinsically tied to that case. In other scenarios, researchers bring a research question to a case. The case, then, is used to study something else, something broader. Researchers refer to this as an “instrumental case study.” A simplified way to differentiate between the two is the focus: an intrinsic case study is centered on the case, while in an instrumental case study the “issues” determine the focus.⁴⁹

This dissertation utilizes an instrumental case study, as I brought my own research questions to the case study. Case study understands research questions as “issues.” Utilizing the Greek alphabet, researchers designate these with the Greek *I* (iota). The issues are what compel the researcher to research a particular issue. Issues assist the researcher in expanding the living human web woven within each case study. Here are five preliminary issues I brought to this dissertation:

- I*₁: How is the combat reintegration experience unique for reservists?
- I*₂: What is the relationship between being a reservist and reintegrating with an MIE?
- I*₃: How does the spatial and temporal proximity of reservists to civilians impact reintegrating with an MIE?
- I*₄: What is the relationship between a reservist and family and friends post-deployment?
- I*₅: How do dominant ideologies impact reintegration with an MIE?

There are some noteworthy misconceptions about case study. One misconception of the methodology concerns the generalizability gained by an individual case study. First, it is

⁴⁸ Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

important to note, as Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe have, that for case study, “generalizability is not the goal, but rather *transferability*—that is, how (if at all) and in what ways understanding and knowledge can be applied in similar contexts and settings.”⁵⁰ A case study becomes transferable through the practical theological task of “thick description.” This thick description “will provide the basis for a qualitative account’s claim to relevance in some broader context.”⁵¹ Bent Flyvbjerg helpfully notes that a case study can enable a researcher to reach conclusions in that “if this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases.”⁵² This is an important critique of case study, and I agree with Flyvbjerg that transferability is possible. Within case study methodology more broadly, Robert Stake’s work shows how what he refers to as a “generalization”—or transferability—is possible. Stake offers a “naturalistic generalizability” that comes from human experience: readers are able to make connections between one case and various life experiences either directly or indirectly.⁵³

Therefore, as with Sigmund Freud’s oeuvre, for example, theories are developed out of a well-chosen and articulated case study. The process of developing a thick description is committed to the appropriate and ethical use of the case study data. Case study refers to this process as “triangulation.” Triangulation is committed to ensuring, with as much accuracy as possible, an ethical study of a phenomenon. Case study triangulation attempts to provide a “substantial body of uncontestable description.”⁵⁴ The outcome of this is a detailing of events that any observer would have noticed. This is fairly straightforward, and it is followed by interpretation. Ambiguous or contested interpretations can be supported with more

⁵⁰ Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map from Beginning to End*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016), 47.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Bent Flyvbjerg, “Five Misunderstandings About Case-study Research,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (April 2006): 230.

⁵³ Stake, *Art of Case Study Research*, 85-88.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 110.

“uncontestable description,” but also through other strategies. With respect to validation, this dissertation utilized, in addition to triangulation, four of John Creswell’s strategies: “peer review or debriefing,” “clarifying researcher bias,” “member checking,” and “rich, thick description.”⁵⁵

For my peer review and debriefing stage of data collection and analysis, I debriefed my emotions and methods with selected “devil’s advocates.”⁵⁶ My devil’s advocates consisted of four individuals, all PhD student-colleagues, who served as my peer review team: three women (one Latinx Christian feminist practical theologian, one Korean American Christian pastor and practical theologian, one Caucasian feminist practical theologian of multiple religious belonging) and one man (European American Buddhist practical theologian). We met twice a week throughout the data collection and dissertation writing phase. I presented research, emotions, and early theoretical analyses. Much of my analyses were critiqued and sharpened through their collaboration.

As I cannot escape my subjectivity, I shared my researcher bias with my participant and in chapter 1 and other parts of this dissertation. I have noted my own situatedness and living human web connectivity that impacts how I understand veteran reintegration. Finally, I did member checking by consulting with my participant about whether I was presenting his experience accurately. I constructed my research design in such a way that the beginning of interviews two and three began with a check-in, as this analysis determined how subsequent questions were asked. I did find that I made numerous assumptions about pieces of data and how they correlated to reintegration. When critiqued, I asked clarifying questions to correct and strengthen my understanding of the thick description. My participant was offered the chance to review the transcripts of interviews via these options: (1) read the transcript himself, (2) have it

⁵⁵ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013), 250-252.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 251.

read to him by myself, or (3) listen to the recorded interview with me present. Once again, this review was an opportunity for the participant to make corrections and clarify intended communication. He declined to read the transcript due to his feeling confident with my clarifying questions. With all of these theoretical and validity underpinnings laid out, I will next describe my research design.

Research Design

Recruitment

To begin, a narrative of the recruitment phase of this dissertation is necessary; that process is, in itself, a site for a practical theological reflection. I started the recruitment portion of my research in May 2018. At this point, I was still relatively new to the Kansas City area and, more importantly, very unfamiliar with the veteran community in the Kansas City metropolitan area. In anticipation of this difficulty, my IRB research protocol and dissertation proposal laid out that I would seek gatekeepers in the veteran community to assist in locating potential participants. My early phone calls and searches centered on local moral injury support groups, the Moral Injury Association of America, and the Kansas City VA Hospital. The Moral Injury Association of America quickly responded and, while noting the importance of the research, informed me that due to the sensitivity of the program I could not participate in nor observe any of their support groups; therefore, I could not invite any of their support group participants to participate in this research project. To some degree, I anticipated this level of privacy and implementation of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) laws.

However, I was somewhat surprised by the lack of support to further the research on moral injury. In some respects, the lack of support matches my frustrations listed in chapters 1 and 2: as moral injury is still, for all intents and purposes, in its infancy, it continues to exist as a

phenomenon of differential diagnosis. Conversations center on the work of Litz or Shay, and as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan rage on toward lasting two decades, seldom are broader cultural questions asked. Local activist veteran support organizations, such as Veterans for Peace or the Veterans Working Group of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), offer a critical lens through which to explore the military-industrial complex, yet specific interventions of care for veterans suffering from moral injury are absent.⁵⁷ Other veteran support organizations, most notably Team RWB (Red, White, and Blue), provide important communal outreach for veterans; yet they are non-political.⁵⁸ What is missing, then, is precisely what this dissertation hopes to provide: a critical and liberative analysis of moral injury, specifically how the American ideology of military service can exacerbate Reserve and National Guard veterans' moral injuries and how counterhegemonic groups can offer a way forward.

As with the Moral Injury Association of America, my request to recruit participants directly from the Kansas City VA was declined. I met with the Kansas City VA's chief of chaplains numerous times via phone calls and in person about this project and what I sought in terms of participants. The chief of chaplains helpfully explained that, even with my Claremont School of Theology IRB's approval, the VA is a difficult institution to get to facilitate outside research (for similar reasons to what I encountered with the Moral Injury Association of America). What this arduous process provided, though, were more gatekeepers to contact and, more importantly, an emerging path to follow.

During those early months of recruitment and the lessons learned, I decided to move away from a reliance on institutions, such as the VA, for another critical reason: many of the VA's support groups for moral injury are filled entirely by active duty veterans. This dissertation

⁵⁷ See <https://www.veteransforpeace.org> and <https://www.dsasa.org/working-groups/veterans-working-group> for more information about these organizations.

⁵⁸ See <https://www.teamrwb.org>.

is primarily interested in the Reserve component, and what I found through my recruitment process further undergirds the necessity for this dissertation. Reserve component veterans continue to experience their military service as something *other*, something less than, and this othering comes about through ideological interactions with civilians. In response to the first question of the first interview, Specialist Phillip immediately detailed to me why his service did not matter, and he stated that he is “just like any other Reserve soldier.” This was not a false modesty; rather, his dismissive tone communicated everything and confirmed much of my own experience as a reservist over ten-plus years. In the military, there is a dichotomy: active duty and then everyone else. How does Phillip, then, reintegrate within a society in which the VA—the veteran healthcare institution—does not implicitly treat his service on a similar level as his active duty counterparts?

Returning to recruitment, the movement away from institutions helped me locate therapists and military chaplains who are providing moral injury support groups or pastoral counseling with veterans experiencing the effects of MIEs in a Reserve component context. During this stage of recruitment, I met army reserve chaplain (Captain) Andrew Jones through an army chaplain colleague we both know. Chaplain Jones knew Phillip from his deployment, and he made the initial contact with Phillip. Phillip was eager to tell his story, and Chaplain Jones introduced us. He signed his informed consent form, and we began meeting. We had three conversations of ninety minutes each from July to August 2018.⁵⁹

Interview Structure

The interviews were “the main road to multiple realities.”⁶⁰ To maintain self-reflexivity in my interviewing I built a period of reflexive analysis into my data collection. I formally

⁵⁹ See Appendix B for a copy of the informed consent form.

⁶⁰ Stake, *Art of Case Study Research*, 64.

interviewed my participant three times. The first interview was a general semi-structured interview lasting ninety minutes. During that interview I asked questions centering on Phillip's experience of reintegration. The case study ideas I described above cultivated these questions, which, to recap, were as follows:

- I*₁: How is the combat reintegration experience unique for reservists?
- I*₂: What is the relationship between being a reservist and reintegrating with an MIE?
- I*₃: How does the spatial and temporal proximity of reservists to civilians impact reintegrating with an MIE?
- I*₄: What is the relationship between reservists and family and friends post-deployment?
- I*₅: How do dominant ideologies impact reintegration with an MIE?

These experiential questions were broken into subset questions on how Phillip's (1) military unit reintegrated him, (2) how his family experienced him, and (3) how he felt within broader society. I then sorted and analyzed these interviews.

Weeks one, three, and five were formal interview weeks. None of these interviews exceeded ninety minutes. Built into my research design was time to sit with the data. Linda Farley notes the importance of "dwelling" with data to discover the multivalent meaning within the raw material.⁶¹ The dwelling stage offered time for a mutual indwelling during which I reflected through journaling on my own experiences of deploying and reintegrating. The mutual indwelling put me *experientially* in Afghanistan with my participant. When he described the smell of diesel gasoline, I could smell diesel gasoline. When he described mountain ranges in southern Afghanistan, I recalled the mountain ranges throughout Kandahar, where I had been stationed. I listened to the music my participant listened to. I spent time with the photos my participant shared. I wanted to immerse myself in my participant's phenomenological "lifeworld." The interviews came to life, so to speak, as I dwelled with them. I dwelled with each interview

⁶¹ Linda Finlay, *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World* (West Sussex, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 229.

before transcribing it, after the transcription, before coding, and after the coding. Each of these steps was an opportunity for empathy with the story I was learning.

Research Journal

I maintained a research journal for each interview and interaction. Almost immediately following each interview, and not exceeding twenty-four hours post-interview, I journaled my reflections and interpretations into a research journal to note researcher bias and overall impressions of my time with Phillip. I began coding after journaling, and I spent a week sitting with the transcripts and my journal. In other words, weeks two, four, and six were reserved for coding and further analysis. The journal proved to be a site of exploration where I could process frustrations with the mechanics of the interview process—or perhaps qualitative research overall—and frustrations with the subject matter overall. What this allowed for was a space to process and check my subjectivity in a separate location from direct participant interaction. Some early theological and theoretical insights came from these rough journaling periods. Finally, I analyzed my journals for themes that were coming up for me, and I cross-referenced them with the coded themes in the actual interview transcripts.

Additional Data Collection

As case study is a thoroughly deep analysis of a bounded case it was advantageous to analyze other sources of data besides spoken word interviews. For example, as I will show in chapter 4, music was a vital coping mechanism for my research participant. Therefore, during interview two, I ascertained artists, specific songs (and lyrics), and themes to study. This, in conjunction with the transcribed interview, developed a more complete picture of Phillip's deployment experience. When my participant shared stories of Afghanistan, I would ask for photos. Once I received pictures, I would analyze these in my data collecting software, NVivo.

Coding

With my participant, I tried to let the interview happen organically and not “pre-think” my coding, with the exception of the case study ideas listed above. I uploaded each transcript and research journal into NVivo for coding. I finalized and edited the codes down to six designated codes, or “nodes” in NVivo, and these had sub-codes as well. Early coding was done through an in vivo approach, in which I took codes “from the actual language” of the interview and began shaping my interpretation of them.⁶² For example, what became a dominant theme—“belonging”—was originally coded as “service didn’t matter,” as this was a direct quote from interviews one and two.

To conclude this chapter, I want to describe my commitment to the methods within narrative therapy, as these methods impacted how I conceptualized (and asked) questions in the interviews, and they influenced the interpretation process as well. Through journaling and consultation, I became more aware of how my approach was shaped by the ideas and practices of narrative psychotherapy. The narrative form of questioning developed by White, Epston, Madigan, and others shaped my conceptualization and articulation of interview questions; the psychotherapeutic approach also shaped my stance as a researcher vis-à-vis the participant and my interpretation of the data. It seems prudent to reflect on this influence here.

Narrative Therapy

My fundamental method of pastoral counseling, narrative therapy, informed the interview process, shaping how I conceptualized not only the questions I asked in my semi-structured questioning, but also how I conceptualized subjectivity and located unique outcomes. Michael White and David Epston first developed narrative therapy, and pastoral theologians such as

⁶² Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016), 77.

Duane Bidwell, Christie Neuger, Karen Scheib, Suzanne Coyle, and Andrew Lester adopted it. Narrative therapy offers military chaplains a postmodern hermeneutic for conceptualizing the world, and it provides military chaplains who are not psychotherapeutically trained a conversation partner for effective counseling.

Narrative therapy fits within a military chaplain's professional scope as it can be utilized within a short-term counseling situation and military chaplains primarily engage in short-term counseling sessions. Most of these sessions are done "on the run," so military chaplains need a conceptual framework for providing spiritual care support in settings in which other distractions might be present.⁶³ Narrative therapy and short-term counseling allow for spiritual care provision while walking to the motor pool or eating together in a dining facility, for example.

For these reasons and myriad more, chaplains need short-term counseling perspectives. The goal of most soldiers is not to meet for an extensive amount of time or to return for multiple sessions, but to work through concerns as quickly as possible. Adding to this, as pastoral theologian Christie Neuger asserts, narrative therapy is "amenable to normal pastoral care strategies in that its primary intervention is conversational, which lets the counselee lead the process. It helps counselees to find their strengths."⁶⁴ Chaplains are well positioned to work within a framework that empowers and privileges soldiers. Narrative therapy fits within a time span of five to seven meetings, which helps chaplains avoid practicing outside their expertise levels and also affords them the opportunity to refer to other resources as needed. Using myself as an example, I am not licensed or trained as a psychotherapist; therefore, short-term counseling allows me to provide pastoral counseling and to support soldiers with integrity while maintaining my professional boundaries.

⁶³ Duane R. Bidwell, *Short-Term Spiritual Guidance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), xi.

⁶⁴ Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women: A Narrative, Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2001), 43.

Narrative therapy's postmodern conceptualization is an essential starting point, since it differentiates narrative psychotherapy from other psychotherapeutic traditions. Michael White and David Epston developed their understanding of narrative therapy as a dialogic perspective that "turned away from prevailing psychological, psychiatric, systemic, and other theoretical views informed by individualism."⁶⁵ Narrative therapy posits that people make meaning of their lives through story and story their lives accordingly. Within these narratives, there is an overabundance of meanings and interpretations about events and people. Narrative therapists do not place truth within a hierarchy. There is no single interpretation of an event; each story is told from multiple perspectives. Narrative therapy unravels any argument for an objective picture of reality. Reality is constructed through experience and interpretation. Theoretically, this concept falls within social constructionist theory, in that the narratives individuals construct generate a worldview reflective of their interpretations.

Narrative therapy, then, privileges the storyteller. White and Epston maintain that since an objective view of the world is not possible, people ascribe meaning to their lived experiences. In other words, "experience must be storied and it is this storying that determines the meaning ascribed to experience."⁶⁶ In addition, individual narratives take place within broader, cultural narratives. Within these broader, cultural narratives are dominant ideologies, which exacerbate the struggles of returning veterans. Individual veterans ascribe meaning to their moral injuries and reintegration based, in part, on narratives received in civilian life.

Narrative therapy not only draws on social constructionism; it positions its theory on the insights of poststructural philosophy. To understand narrative therapy more completely, a practitioner must grasp the basics of poststructuralism. Narrative therapist Stephen Madigan

⁶⁵ Madigan, *Narrative Therapy*, 12.

⁶⁶ White and Epston, *Narrative Means*, 10.

helpfully describes how White and Epston relied heavily on poststructuralism—and in particular, Michel Foucault—since they were already outsiders within the psychological community. This marginalization allowed for a kinship to develop with the burgeoning postmodern critique of the Enlightenment’s view of the self. White and Epston critiqued the dominant understanding of what was “normal, what constituted a self, what a person’s or group’s preferred roles were supposed to be, and the real quantifiable identity of the other.”⁶⁷

The poststructuralism of Michel Foucault is perhaps the most important conversation partner for White and Epston. I will discuss the Foucauldian foundations of narrative therapy momentarily, but what is most imperative to understand at this point is that dominant cultural discourses set the boundaries for our collective narratives. These boundaries contain the language needed to communicate the narrative, the conceptual framework (or lens) to process its meaning, and the regulating structures that determine the acceptability of one’s own interpretation. Having said this, it is now critical to name some clinical implications of poststructuralism within the milieu of military chaplaincy.

From the perspective of poststructuralism, service members go to a chaplain when a personal interpretation of reality does not fit within the broader, socially constructed narrative. The individual cannot see future potential in the current construction. It is when the social discourses are ruptured that narrative therapy offers ways to privilege what Foucault described as “local knowledges.”⁶⁸ To gain access to these local knowledges, narrative therapists work from a deconstructed listening perspective that seeks to reflect to the counselee his or her personal inner resources, which can create new meanings. Narrative therapists seek to “reclaim the voice of the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, “Two Lectures,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon and trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 82.

client” through the narrative practices of the text analogy, externalizing the problem, and re-authoring peoples’ lives.⁶⁹

Narrative therapy practices emphasize deconstructing (through such practices as “externalizing the problem,” not the person) and reconstructing problematic stories (looking for “unique outcomes”) in order to develop and enact a preferred story. I utilize three practices of narrative therapy: text analogy, externalizing the problem, and re-authoring situations.

Text Analogy

Anthropologist Edward Bruner’s concept of text analogy influenced White and Epston. Bruner noted that there are two primary modes of thought: narrative and paradigmatic. In narrative thinking, “the mind engages in sequential, action-oriented, detail-driven thought. In paradigmatic thinking, the mind transcends particularities to achieve systematic, categorical cognition.”⁷⁰ The text analogy approach privileges the lived experience of the individual coming for therapy. In that privileging, the chaplain begins to listen for gaps in the narrative. When individuals retell stories, there are key events, pieces of information, or individuals who are either not included in the narrative or are remembered differently from the previous telling of the story. As White and Epston note, “stories are full of gaps which persons must fill in order for the story to be performed.”⁷¹

Within a postmodern worldview in which objective reality is not knowable, what people collect and know of their life is through experience. It is that experience that gets interpreted. White and Epston note, “Although a piece of behavior occurs in time in such a way that it no

⁶⁹ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 87. There are more practices that White and Epston detail in their work, but the practices I have named seem the most apropos for the type of sessions a military chaplain encounters.

⁷⁰ Madigan, *Narrative Therapy*, 33n3.

⁷¹ White and Epston, *Narrative Means*, 13.

longer exists in the present by the time it is attended to, the meaning that is ascribed to the behavior survives across time.”⁷² It is how we tell a story that gives it meaning.

Externalizing the Problem

Externalizing is arguably the most important practice in White and Epston’s oeuvre. Externalizing creates a “liminal space” in which an individual can “reflect on their relationship to the problems themselves.”⁷³ People are not problems; rather, problems are problems. Neuger notes that externalizing does three things: first, it allows the problem to be one aspect of a person’s life, instead of all-encompassing; second, it aligns the counselor and the client on “the same side” against the problem; and finally, externalizing brings the problem into the foreground.⁷⁴ White adds that once an externalization of the problem happens, an individual is able to begin mapping its influence on the person’s life.⁷⁵

Re-authoring Situations

When externalizing problems, a chaplain is listening for “unique outcomes.” A unique outcome falls outside the main narrative and becomes “a fertile source for the generation, or re-generation, of alternative stories.”⁷⁶ Therefore, after the problem is externalized and objectified, an individual can identify neglected pieces of the stories (the gaps mentioned above). Re-authoring gives the individual a “point of entry” to re-narrate experiences in a less problematic way by doing what he or she is already adept at doing: making meaning out of events.⁷⁷

The Appropriation of Michel Foucault within Narrative Therapy

⁷² Ibid., 9.

⁷³ Coyle, *Uncovering Spiritual Narratives*, 23.

⁷⁴ Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 44.

⁷⁵ White, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, 38-54.

⁷⁶ White and Epston, *Narrative Means*, 15.

⁷⁷ White, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, 61.

Returning to Foucault, I now want to provide a brief background on Foucault, discuss three of his concepts, and analyze how narrative therapy functions differently through his insights. To say that narrative therapy is poststructuralist implies an evolution from structuralism. Structuralism posited that the world is understood through structures within which truth and reality exist. In one sense, Foucault was closely aligned with structuralism in that he believed society and language were shaped by discourses, rules, and systems. However, Foucault was not willing to go further into structuralism.

Foucault's poststructuralism stands in contrast to structuralism, first, in that he did not posit that underlying structures could explain humanity. He asserted that everything must be understood as a construction. The meanings inferred from these constructions lie with the individual. Second, Foucault claimed it was impossible to step outside of discourse and study things objectively. We cannot step outside of our language. For example, the word "dog" cannot contain all that is ontologically the animal. However, over time, through the repeated use of the term *dog*, humanity has attached the significance of the word *dog* onto a particular category of animal. Let us consider a more socially useful example. At a stoplight, there is nothing inherent in the color red that means "stop." We have all collectively decided that red means stop. This collective decision includes regulatory consequences for *not* stopping. Meaning, then, resides in how we interpret language. At the heart of a poststructural interpretation is an understanding of difference. Meaning is not attached to one singular word. Meaning comes through a system of words. Third, Foucault was concerned that we do not sense the power that is generated within socially conditioned discourses.

Foucault's immense project can be narrowed down to a focus on human subjectivity. More specifically, Foucault was interested in critiquing discourses that turned subjects (i.e.,

people) into objects (i.e., things). He looked at dominant institutions and critiqued unacknowledged power. He spent much of his career critiquing the modern bourgeois state, including its police, court system, prisons, and medical system—particularly the development of new “sciences” such as psychiatry. Foucault understood himself as a social historian documenting “histories of the present,” and through the use of methods he described as “archaeology” and “genealogy,” he studied the past to better understand the present.⁷⁸

Foucault showed how previous models for operating institutions may actually be preferable to our current models, and if they are not preferable, they may at least offer a critique of our current discourses (e.g., how institutions treated the “madman” during the Renaissance versus how such a person is treated now). What is consistently compelling about Foucault’s work is the manner in which he causes his readers to question certain aspects of life that they assume are natural or given. We could say that Foucault’s “gift to us is an unwillingness to let go of that which we want to let go.”⁷⁹ At a deeper level, Foucault also reveals that the way things are currently is not the way they are intended to be. Rather, they are simply one account of how things could be based on discourses.

To take one example, in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault moves through a historical analysis of state punishment to critique the modern assumption that our current penal system is more humane than previous (sovereign) justice systems in which torture and public executions were more prevalent.⁸⁰ We moved from torture to imprisonment, from torture to the timetable. The problem, which is easily glossed over, is that the current system

⁷⁸ Foucault’s archaeology analyzed the local discursive level of documents that provided the rules for the functioning of a *savoir* (knowledge). In his genealogy, Foucault was concerned with how certain knowledges were brought into discourse. His methodological movement shifted from texts to materiality, from discourses to bodies.

⁷⁹ Jonathan Tran, *Foucault and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 17.

⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995).

appears fine, but the punishment happens behind bars—in private. Since the administration of punishment is now in private, it is more difficult to protest against. In other words, a shift occurred from many people witnessing the few punishments (like executions) to a few people witnessing the imprisonment of many. The target of violence changed, moving from bodies to souls. Discipline now comes through the “gaze” rather than through force. This, for Foucault, is barbaric.

Therefore, since Foucault is critical for understanding narrative therapy, a brief exploration of the inseparability between power and knowledge is necessary. After doing this, while limiting my scope to three of Foucault’s works (*Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, and *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*), I want to explore his three modes of human subjectivity.

Foucault conceptualizes power as having three modes. First, power is not a negative force; on the contrary, its influence is positive. To push past the negative influence of power, Foucault posits, “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes,’ it ‘represses,’ it ‘censors,’ it ‘abstracts,’ it ‘masks,’ it ‘conceals.’ In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.”⁸¹ We experience the “positive” impacts of power. Power constitutes people’s lives or, as Foucault often emphasizes, power “subjugates.” Subjugation produces “docile bodies.” Power’s subjugation and expansion is dependent on a certain production of knowledges and discourses to support it, a topic to which I will return in what follows.

⁸¹ Ibid., 194.

Second, power is decentralized. There is a sense in which Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (and its gaze), which Foucault expounds upon in *Discipline and Punish*, is a centralized vector of power. However, what Foucault shows through his analysis of the Panopticon and the subsequent gaze is power's capillary effect. A capillary power is a modern phenomenon in which power stretches into the most intimate and private aspects of individuals' lives. This power—which is decentralized, as it is not upheld and supported by the state or other apparatuses—works to actually strengthen the center. As Foucault posited:

I would say that we should direct our researches on the nature of power not towards the juridical edifice of sovereignty, the State apparatuses and the ideologies which accompany them, but towards domination and the material operators of power, toward forms of subjection and the inflections and utilizations of their localized systems, and toward strategic apparatuses. We must eschew the model of Leviathan in the study of power. We must escape from the limited field of juridical sovereignty and State institutions, and instead base our analysis of power on the study of techniques and tactics of domination.⁸²

Capillary power is actually more menacing than a centralized power like a monarch, because a centralized power has a particular location and is reachable. Capillary power, in contrast, is “everywhere to the extent that it is nowhere.”⁸³ There is no longer a big Other that humanity can “blame” for oppression; rather, through the gaze, humanity becomes a vector for self-surveillance and its own producer of capillary power.

Third, power is not vested in *somebody* or *something*. Power simply *is*. There is no outside of power. This builds nicely from the second point: as there is no centralized source of power, power is able to flow freely, which is how individuals are able to resist and redirect power. Human freedom cannot exist within power relations without the possibility of resistance. Foucault noted, “There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more

⁸² Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 102.

⁸³ Tran, *Foucault and Theology*, 24.

real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised.”⁸⁴ Power can flow with or against regimes.

These three reconceptualizations of power help Foucault connect the practices, or knowledges, needed to uphold power. Therefore, power is upheld by knowledge, and knowledge is upheld by power. On this point, Foucault states that we are “judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertaking, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power.”⁸⁵ Due to this connection, Foucault often combined the words as “power/knowledge” or “knowledge/power,” signifying their inseparability. Foucault stated, “There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.”⁸⁶

A knee-jerk reaction to conversations surrounding power is to consider how to prevent the selfish use of power, as if power is always administered through a top-down hierarchy. This assumption is problematic for two reasons. One, it is a negative conception of power. Second, power techniques come from the “local level,” and ascend up.⁸⁷ We are all, therefore, subjected to and subjecting others to the impacts of power/knowledge. Foucault also unpacks what he defines as “subjugated knowledges” into the two categories of “erudite knowledge” and “local knowledges.” An erudite knowledge is knowledge that has been “buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization.”⁸⁸ Local knowledges are those currently in

⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, “Power and Strategies,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon and trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 142.

⁸⁵ Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 94.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸⁷ White and Epston, *Narrative Means*, 22.

⁸⁸ Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 81.

circulation that have been “denied or deprived of the space in which they could be adequately performed.”⁸⁹ These knowledges can be resurrected. Once they are given a proper space in which to exist, their performance can critique dominant discourses. What Foucault argues for in this performance is an “insurrection of subjugated knowledges.”⁹⁰

Power/knowledge is produced through three forms of human subjectification: dividing practices, scientific classification, and subjectification. The concept of dividing practices was laid out in Foucault’s text, *Madness and Civilization* (this was also his dissertation).⁹¹ In this text, Foucault argued that these practices are implemented at both the social level and the spatial level. For example, people’s concept of the “madman” shifted from an object of fascination to a threat to civilization. This (perceived) threat of the madman created spatial practices of confinement—both for society’s safety and for the madman’s own benefit. Who were the “insane”? They included “the debauched, spendthrift fathers, prodigal sons, blasphemers, men who ‘seek to undo themselves,’ libertines.”⁹² It is important to note that the rehabilitation of “insane” patients was connected to reason. The individuals labeled as “madmen” were beyond rehabilitation since they were outside of rationality. Because of this thinking, physical punishment was commonplace, and it was displayed for the public to see through the use of bars on asylum windows and chains used for restraint. “Irrational madmen” could be “mastered only by discipline and brutalizing.”⁹³

New knowledges were needed that could understand how individuals lost rationality. Psychiatry was born into this vacuum, complete with language, practices, and discourse to diagnosis and divide. As Foucault states, “The ‘scientific psychiatry’ of the nineteenth century

⁸⁹ White and Epston, *Narrative Means*, 26.

⁹⁰ Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 81.

⁹¹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

⁹² *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 75.

became possible. It was in these ‘diseases of the nerves’ and in these ‘hysterias,’ which would soon provoke its irony, that this psychiatry took its origin.”⁹⁴ However, it was not that simple; the birth of psychiatry did not “solve” the problem of the madman.

From these discourses, what emerged was an understanding that we are all subject to madness. Madness, like a contagion, can spread. Foucault noted, “A fear arose—a fear formulated in medical terms but animated, basically by a moral myth. People were in dread of a mysterious disease that spread, it was said, from the houses of confinement and would soon threaten the cities.”⁹⁵ The solution that arose out of this social fear was the separation of the populations and the segregation of the “mad” as a means to rehabilitate them. Madigan explains this phenomenon as follows: “In this process of social objectification and categorization, human beings are given both a social and a personal identity. The leper colony is a cogent historical example of a dividing practice.”⁹⁶ This practice has implications for veterans experiencing combat trauma as well. One of the primary reasons veterans do not seek clinical help for combat trauma issues (e.g., PTSD, traumatic brain injury, or moral injury) is the fear of being given a societal label such as “crazy” or “head case.” Some veterans equate the medical system with merely prescribing medication, which works to stigmatize the veterans and further normalizes a discourse in which combat veterans are “head cases.”⁹⁷

Scientific classification builds on dividing practices. Foucault understood scientific classification as the production of a body into a thing. Madigan notes how the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) is utilized as a way to classify individuals. Further, Madigan notes that it is in these classifying discourses that it is “given the status of

⁹⁴ Ibid., 158.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 202.

⁹⁶ Madigan, *Narrative Therapy*, 41.

⁹⁷ Moon, “‘Turn Now, My Vindication is at Stake,’” 94.

‘science.’”⁹⁸ Any practice that objectifies a body into a classification—for example, through the compiling of a medical record file on a patient—can be used as a means of control.

While the first two practices, dividing practices and scientific classification, are experienced passively (individuals *receive* a classification) subjectification is an active position. What are the conditions of possibility by which an individual classifies oneself? Foucault argues that people produce themselves according to preferred interpretations of cultural norms. Madigan notes that “people monitor and conduct themselves according to their interpretation of set cultural norms and that they also seek out external authority figures such as religious leaders or psychoanalysts for further guidance.”⁹⁹

This proactive performance is best exemplified through Foucault’s concept of “the gaze.” Part of the sheer brilliance of *Discipline and Punish* is Foucault’s argument that Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon is an example of society’s move to control subjects. Initially, the Panopticon was thought of solely as a means of prison control. In this structure, fewer prison guards are able to have control over more prisoners. Cells are constructed in a circular fashion around a central tower. The centrality of the guard tower allows guards to (always) see out, but the prisoners can never see in. The backlighting of the guard’s tower creates an atmosphere in which prisoners cannot look into the tower to see if they are being watched. The prisoner is “seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication.”¹⁰⁰ This “gaze” is ever-present and “is alert everywhere.”¹⁰¹ The gaze replaced punishment as guards no longer needed to actively punish prisoners; they could gain similar effects through the gaze.

⁹⁸ Madigan, *Narrative Therapy*, 42.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 195.

Prisoners behaved because they *might be* under surveillance. The prisoners had to remain disciplined in the event they were being observed.

This insight is instructive and has its own merits; however, Foucault's analysis pushes the gaze further. The Panopticon produced the subject—an isolated and contained subject (in this case, a person in a cell). What was implemented in the prison system could be implemented at a societal level. Foucault posited:

It was the dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power or the prerogatives of some corporation, zones of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's hearts should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and that opinion of all reign over each.¹⁰²

The gaze becomes self-surveillance, and its own producer of power. The Panopticon is the perfect illustration for the positive effects of power. The gaze normalizes the subjects' behavior in such a way that it produces a certain kind of subject. Knowledges are constructed around the subjects to further normalize the behavior. At the societal level, then, "Prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons."¹⁰³ Foucault's three modes of human subjectivity are important theoretical moves that led him to the concept of the production of a subject. Further, there are clear clinical implications for a practitioner working within a narrative therapy framework.

Implications for Practical Theology and This Project

To conclude, this chapter has excavated much ground. Methodologically, this dissertation is committed to a practical theological liberative praxis from Emmanuel Lartey. Lartey's praxis

¹⁰² Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon and trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 152.

¹⁰³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 228.

is essential for providing effective spiritual care that takes the web of interdependence seriously. To take these webs and social systems seriously, this dissertation is employing a case study methodology. Looking at social systems, I am concerned with how dominant ideologies exacerbate and complicate reintegration with moral injuries; this is the ideological critique I am engaging. Therefore, I am looking to explore something broader than an intrinsic case study; I am interested in an instrumental case study. Practices of narrative psychotherapy shaped my articulation of interview questions; the psychotherapeutic approach also shaped my stance as a researcher vis-à-vis the participant and my interpretation of the data. Through this excavation, this dissertation is firmly placed to move into data analysis of my case study, and with that, I now introduce my participant.

Chapter 4

The Descriptive Task, or a Thick Description

I feel like I am being eaten from the inside out and I can't tell anyone what's going on because everyone is so grateful to me all the time and I feel like I'm ungrateful or something. Or like I'll give away that I don't deserve anyone's gratitude and really they should all hate me for what I've done but everyone loves me for it and it's driving me crazy.¹

— Kevin Powers

This chapter unpacks the thick description of the reintegration experience of Phillip Campbell, a reserve combat veteran who is still working through the moral injury connected to his MIE. Returning to the four tasks of practical theologian Richard Osmer, much of this chapter engages in his first two tasks: the “descriptive-empirical” and the “interpretive.”² Following this chapter, chapters 5 and 6 will take this interpretative work and move toward Osmer’s “normative” and “pragmatic” tasks, although some foreshadowing to these tasks is present here as well.

I now proceed into what Miller-McLemore’s “the living human document within the web” by describing the unique situatedness and braided social locations of my participant that offered the context within which my case study unfolded.³ Following closely from there, I will detail three prominent themes of alienation that I uncovered via my coding: belonging, divided identities, and betrayal. Finally, this chapter will detail my participant’s religious resources; this transitions the dissertation into chapter 5 and its focus on a revised praxis method of correlation, using my theological and cognate conversation partners. With this structural road map in place, I now introduce my participant.

¹ Kevin Powers, *The Yellow Birds* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2013), 144.

² Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

³ Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 51.

SPC Phillip Campbell

Army Reserve Specialist Phillip Campbell is in his late forties. Phillip is a straight, white, and cisgender male. He is the father of two adult children (ages 24 and 22), and a grandfather to a two-year-old granddaughter. SPC Phillip and his wife Vicki have been married for eleven years, including a four-month separation after his deployment to Afghanistan in early 2013. Phillip's life before enlisting in the military was inconspicuous. He described it as a time of "dead-end jobs" and of ultimately "going nowhere with my life." Phillip was able to work some private security jobs in his early thirties, which gave him a sense of doing something that mattered. He liked protecting people—it made him feel needed. Phillip approached the job with military focus: he trained hard, he bought the best gear, and he carried himself differently. He would iron his uniform, polish his boots, and clean his pistol with a level of dedication that would eventually help him excel in the military. Even in the uniform of a security guard, Phillip felt a sense of patriotism. His patriotism and the need to "serve his country" in the post-9/11 Global War on Terror landscape led him to start asking deeper questions about perhaps enlisting in the military. The majority of his colleagues were veterans, so he began asking them such questions as, "Why did you join?" When he would see them bring their military uniforms to work to change before going to reserve duty on the weekends, he started to think he could do both: be a "normal dude and a soldier." The Reserve component was alluring to Phillip. Vicki also liked that he would not be gone and deployed as often, but she also felt a patriotic fervor when he described serving to her.

Pragmatically, outside of any patriotic pride, Phillip and Vicki wanted to own a home, and they knew that without a VA Home Loan, they would probably never be able to afford one. This was in 2010, on the heels of the economic collapse that took place in the US. Phillip knew

in his head that the army was the right place for him; he was tired of trying to balance his checkbook and find a decent mortgage. Phillip also knew in his heart that this was what he was “called to do as a husband and father.” Phillip’s story is common for some service members in the Reserve component: there is a healthy mixture of pragmatism and patriotism that makes serving part-time in the military an honorable option.

Phillip enlisted in the United States Army Reserve in 2010. When it came time to decide what he was going to do in the military, he was just “excited, stoked even” to serve, and therefore he wanted to serve in various jobs, or “Military Occupational Specialties” (MOS), including the military police, chaplain’s assistant, or truck driver. Phillip drove his old pickup truck home from the recruiter’s office and reflected on growing up working on trucks with his dad. Phillip was excited to work with his hands; he always enjoyed a hard day’s work; and he thought the army could provide him an opportunity to do such work. He returned to the recruiter the next day and decided on becoming a truck driver, a “Motor Transport Operator,” which is more commonly referred to by its MOS designator as an “88M” or “88 Mike.” Phillip signed the contract and waited to leave for basic training. He was filled with a mixture of excitement and anxiety: he was finally able to serve, but he would be the oldest person in his class by some margin. He didn’t want to fail. He started running every day and going to the gym as much as possible. When Phillip’s alarm went off at 4:45 in the morning, he would get out of bed, lace his new running shoes, say a prayer, and go run. He had never been a “runner,” so the goal of these early runs was just to beat his previous day’s time. Phillip recalled these days as times when he was mentally becoming a soldier; although he could not completely know what it meant, he was acting as if he were already a soldier.

Phillip attended his initial Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training courses at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Just as Phillip was “stoked” to serve, he succeeded in basic training, and although he had anxiety about his social locations (married, a father, and in his late thirties), he ended up thriving and loving every bit of training. Experiencing live-fire ranges or rolling around in the mud were “pure fun”; he could not explain it any other way. With a hearty laugh, he recounted that the vast majority of his graduating class could have been his children. However, with the military uniform on, he felt accepted and a part of the unit. Phillip belonged, and being in the army “kept him young.” This sense of belonging also applied to his Christian faith. A theme emerged in Basic Training that would follow Phillip throughout his military career: an instant connection with other Christian soldiers. His Christian “brothers” sustained and strengthened his faith. His Christian faith can be described as typical of a nondenominational Christian worldview, as he spent time in a Calvary Bible community and other nondenominational Christian communities.

During Basic Training, Phillip could not get enough of the Bible. He received a New International Version (NIV) Bible in Basic Training that he still uses to this day, and poignantly, that he took on missions in Afghanistan. The spine is worn, the pages are filled with highlights and scribbled notes, and there are numerous bookmarks of favorite passages—what Phillip called “life verses.” Some of his life verses connected military topics and his Christian faith, specifically a sacrificial and redemptive narrative of military service. For example, he would read about the attributes of a warrior and the similarities with the faithfulness required of being a Christian. He gravitated toward the Christian trope of sacrifice found particularly in the Gospel according to John 15:13: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” This sort of hermeneutic is not solely Phillip’s, as it is prevalent in many Christian

congregations and in the US civic religion of militarism. Professor Kelly Denton-Borhaug astutely notes that the “redemptive interpretation of soldier’s suffering is a kind of thinking that is alive and active in American civil religion, as well as in religious institutions across the nation.”⁴ Phillip saw connection and overlap between the soldier he was becoming and the Christian he was becoming.⁵

After his deployment, Phillip went through a deep season of isolation and abandonment, and it is noteworthy that this was also the season in which he felt isolated from God. Without his “battle buddies” co-suffering with him, his faith also went through a season of isolation. Phillip’s faith, then, is a communal faith. This is not to say that Phillip’s personal spiritual disciplines were reserved for a communal setting; rather, Phillip’s prayer life, daily Bible devotional reading, and listening to praise music were daily personal disciplines that were sustained alongside a committed community. Within his platoon, a small group of soldiers became “accountability partners” and prayed for one another. When other soldiers had weekend passes, Phillip got his Bible out and read through the New Testament.

When graduation came, Phillip was prouder of himself than he had ever been. He put on his Army Service Uniform (the formal dress uniform) and smiled as he looked at himself in the mirror: who was this man? he thought. Graduation was also a time to say goodbye. With tears in his eyes, he said farewell to friends and new battle buddies who were scattering throughout the country—and the world. On the last night of basic training, when other soldiers were partying, Phillip and his spiritual battle buddies prayed together and for each other. They were becoming more than military comrades; they truly felt like a family.

⁴ Denton-Borhaug, “Like Acid Seeping into Your Soul,” 117.

⁵ In Appendix A, I outline how Sigmund Freud’s death drive informs my thinking concerning Phillip’s and other veterans’ self-understanding as “warriors.” However, a Freudian analysis of military service and the horrors of war fall outside the scope of the dissertation.

After Phillip departed from his basic and advanced courses at Fort Jackson, he was assigned to his first, and only, United States Army Reserve unit, a forward support company (FSC) for an engineer battalion. Typically, within the organizational structure of an engineer battalion, the headquarters element (HHC) has an FSC attached to it. The FSC is, as the name suggests, a support element. An FSC's role is to offer logistical support to a battalion commander. This element consists of supply and transportation (food services and distribution) and maintenance (including vehicle service and combat vehicle recovery teams). If a vehicle breaks down, for example, mechanics or drivers from an FSC are sent to provide support. In a field environment, the cooks who prepare and transport meals are from an FSC element. FSC elements are especially critical for the type of missions Phillip conducted in Afghanistan. Materials, both vehicles and equipment, that need to move throughout a battle space are typically moved by an FSC unit. Therefore, FSC elements are on the road constantly, arguably as much as infantry platoons. They operate outside the secure base—"outside the wire"—for different missions.

Once Phillip got to his unit, his love of the army only continued to grow. This love for the military did not go away when he eventually left the service. Five years after leaving the army, he still describes the pride he has for the uniform. His pride in the uniform is both figurative—he is proud of what the uniform represents historically—and literal: he has pride for the actual uniform. He often walks down into his basement, where his army kit is located. He sits and gazes at his uniform, making sure there is no dust on any items. His uniforms lie crisply on a hanger, displayed with reverence. In his basement are other mementos: ID tags (colloquially known as "dog tags"), unit crests, photos from combat, and a DVD that his unit compiled of their tour. He still watches it yearly. It has become an early summer tradition. Phillip started smoking cigars in

Afghanistan, and he continues that habit at home; every time he has a “cigar night,” he wears his black mesh cap with a Velcro patch of his platoon’s nickname: the Wolf Pack.

Phillip liked who he was in the military. He was proud of his service and proud of the man he was. His part-time service in a typical Army Reserve unit included monthly “battle assemblies,” more commonly referred to as “drill” weekends. The intent of these monthly assemblies was to perform job functions and maintain readiness. Every summer, Phillip would spend two weeks at an annual training exercise. He could not wait to drill. He could not wait to be in the field, sleeping in a tent, and driving his truck. In field exercises, Phillip got up early and enjoyed the fresh summer air. He started every morning with a cup of black coffee and waited for his battle buddies to wake up. As he described these training exercises, he emphasized his love for the camaraderie, the mission focus, being in uniform, and talking about his Christian faith.

Before Phillip deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), he mobilized to an active duty base in preparation for deployment. Reserve units are required to train to the same standard as an active duty unit, but in a tighter window. It was during this window of time that Phillip started to conceptualize the seriousness of which he was about to embark. As a truck driver, he had extensive training on improvised explosive device (IED) procedures. Phillip recounted and described not only what warning signs to look for, but also what type of IED to expect in different geographic locations. Following these training events, Phillip would return to his barracks and contemplate how his life and his military service were about to get *real*. During one exercise, Phillip was walking in an IED training lane. The objective was to simply move through the exercise, note any IEDs, and not set off any. Phillip was developing a sense of arrogance as he did the exercise multiple times without error. However, as

the sun began to set, he was walking along and stepped on a simulated IED. When the buzzer went off, he felt his heart drop. He was embarrassed, but more than feeling embarrassed, he was scared that he might actually die in Afghanistan. Phillip always knew he could die during deployment, but during this training exercise specifically, he realized, “I could die anywhere in that place. I was nervous even thinking about walking around.” He walked back to his barracks praying to God for guidance. After this experience, as sobering as it was, Phillip deployed to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: Hypervigilance, a Connected Divine Experience, and an MIE

As a truck driver within an FSC element, Phillip’s primary mission was driving support vehicles to outlying combat outposts (COPs) and forward operating bases (FOBs) throughout western and southwestern Afghanistan. Typically, in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a FOB was a larger base that served as a hub for various units (American and coalition forces). A COP, on the other hand, typically served as a “fire base” that targeted a specific area of enemy activity. Smaller elements lived on a COP. Therefore, a COP is reliant on resupply and support from larger FOBs in the area. Phillip’s missions could be quick “turn and burns,” in which his convoy would drive to a COP, drop off or pick up the needed equipment, and return to the larger FOB. Other missions, often called CONOPs (convoy operations), were more detailed, and necessitated two to three days outside the wire. Phillip’s deployed life had a mixture of routine, predictability, and unpredictability. He had a daily routine: his alarm went off at 6:00 a.m., and he did some sort of exercise, listened to heavy metal music while getting ready, walked to get breakfast at the same dining facility every day, checked on his truck, received the day’s briefing, and then either went on a mission or prepared for the next day’s mission. Within this routine, Phillip quickly

established a practice of regularly attending chapel services. He printed the chapel schedule and placed one in his truck and one in his Bible.

Phillip attended chapel every weekend he could in Afghanistan. If he could not attend services, he and some battle buddies would pray together and talk about their favorite Bible verses. In Phillip's kitbag was his trusted camouflage-adorned NIV Bible. On numerous summer evenings, Phillip would lean against his truck and pray for his unit. He had a deep connection to his faith. Phillip never felt alone in Afghanistan. He attended the main FOB chapel's contemporary service, which was in the style of nondenominational Christian worship. In my own experience, the level of sophistication of the chapel experience in Afghanistan surprised me. I expected to facilitate expeditionary chapel services in bunkers and on the hoods of trucks—which I did facilitate—but those expectations are from wars gone by.

By and large, religious services on the bigger installations in Iraq and Afghanistan have all the amenities that a Western church would have: coffee and donuts, PowerPoint slides with lyrics projected on a screen, electric guitars, microphones, drums, bulletins, and designated buildings. Buildings, in themselves, are not necessarily unique, but what was unique was the cleanliness. Chapels were clean. While dirt and dust mired the buildings and living areas, chapels were clean. One could see the floor. The blue cloth seats were still blue. In an austere environment in which dust permanently coated everything with a fine cake-like covering, chapels were immaculate. Phillip noted that the chapel was a place he wanted to be, and he did not mean only because of the spiritual content.

Phillip's MIE occurred early in his deployment. While driving the lead truck of a thirteen-vehicle convoy on a narrow Afghanistan road en route to a FOB in southwestern Afghanistan, Phillip's convoy approached a small, beat-up white sedan driving in the opposite

direction. Phillip saw the vehicle approaching as they both came upon a narrow bridge. Phillip described the scene as follows:

In our pre-convoy brief, we had been warned about an IED threat. Or maybe it was a VBIED [vehicle-born IED]. . . I don't even know, there was always something briefed to us that was "last seen on such and such route"! The weird thing about that day is that traffic usually stops for us. We have this power when we drive over there. . . We had power over there. . . It felt good at the time! Stay away from us! When we were out rolling, we would move people out of the way, whether by blaring our horns or just riding someone's bumper until they moved. This damn car didn't move, though, as I approached it. Like five minutes before, a bus was getting way close to us. It hit my side mirror! So, I am already amped and ready for anything. I see the oncoming car . . .

The standard operating procedure (SOP) for the convoy dictated that, as the lead vehicle, Phillip should continue driving at his current speed for the safety of the convoy. Phillip was one of thirteen total vehicles in that convoy, each vehicle containing at least two soldiers and as many as eight. As he approached the car, in his mind he urged the car to stop—almost begging it to. In his headset he could hear his lieutenant, Chavez, commanding him forward: "SPC Campbell, are you kidding me, drive! Don't slow down!" Phillip double-checked that this was the correct course of action. "Are you sure, sir?" Phillip responded, and it was confirmed that he was to continue driving. Phillip's hands began to sweat, and his internal temperature elevated as he approached the vehicle. He could feel the sweat dripping down his back, and he used his green army-issued leather gloves to wipe his brow.

Phillip made eye contact with the driver, a middle-aged man with deep brown eyes dressed in traditional Afghan attire. Phillip's truck struck the oncoming car at a choke point as the convoy approached the bridge. His truck smashed the car, forcing it off the road and into a stone embankment. The sound of metal crunching and glass shattering drowned out the commands coming over the headset. Just as loud as the crash was his own heartbeat racing in his chest. He quickly looked in his side mirror, which had been damaged in the earlier incident with

the bus, but through the cracked glass he did not see anyone exit the vehicle; he merely saw shards of glass puddled in a pool of coolant, oil, and other fluids. Phillip's heart sank. Lieutenant Chavez called over the radio the familiar call sign, "Charlie Mike" (for *C-M*), which all the soldiers understood meant "continue mission."

Now, at home five years later, he thinks about that man and that incident. What did it do to the driver? Was he injured, or worse, dead? Were there other passengers in the vehicle he could not see? How did this affect the driver's livelihood? Convoys have ways to mitigate such risks, whether by signaling with a siren (which Phillip's truck had, but did not use) or by firing a laser beam meant to disorient individuals, but not harm them.⁶ The same procedures used when deciding to fire upon an enemy combatant were used for convoy SOPs. Phillip's convoy that day either did not have them fully in place or did not utilize them.

Phillip's sense of power in Afghanistan ("We have this power when we drive over there. . . We had power over there") was completely turned upside down when he returned home and was no longer within a military cultural construct in which he could impart force on communities. Therefore, what was "right" within the military cultural context, i.e., making the decision to crush the vehicle, is not "right" in his own personal morality. Further, and essential for reintegration purposes, such a dilemma is not as easy as just realizing one is driving on an American highway. The power does not easily dissipate. Phillip still thinks about driving with a similar mentality. He pre-checks his truck daily, maps his route, maps an alternative route, and maintains laser-focused situational awareness of his environment. His current convoys typically end with a family dinner. When he and his daughter were on their way to dinner one evening

⁶ Former army chaplain David W. Peters describes the usage of these laser pointers as a way of warding "off approaching vehicles. . . The Iraqi drivers believe they are lasers from weapon scopes or something. . . Cars pull over to the side of the road while their drivers give us dirty looks." "Sin Eater," in *War and Moral Injury: A Reader*, ed. Robert Emmet Meagher and Douglas A. Pryer (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 214.

(their own two-vehicle convoy), Phillip approached a traffic light turning red. He instinctively accelerated into the intersection and stopped his truck, blocking oncoming traffic to ensure that his daughter made it through. He is proud that his instincts got everyone to dinner safely. He laughs about it, and says, “my wife thought I was nuts.” However, he understood it as “leading my daughter to safety.” It is noteworthy that this memory is from 2018, not from a time soon after he returned home in 2013.

Before deploying, driving was Phillip’s stress reliever (and a reason he decided to be an 88M). He would hop in his truck, turn on some heavy metal music (usually Metallica) and drive the long way home from work. Now, driving is not only a reminder of combat, but also a reminder of how high the stakes can get while driving. Today, driving is a source of anxiety and physiological arousal. At its worst, Phillip had physical sensations in his neck until he felt sick to his stomach. Phillip refused to drive for an entire month after his redeployment because he could not separate civilian life from deployed life. This stress while driving was one of the first indicators that Phillip recognized that told him he needed to see a counselor for help, but he did not do so for a few more months. He described how his anxiety from driving prevents him from doing basic tasks. Because he avoids driving, he ends up avoiding the outside world. The entire driving experience is what troubles him: from checking the vehicle, to driving, to the hyper vigilance of driving.

There is one more element of Phillip’s MIE that is noteworthy as it relates to his reintegration: Phillip’s reintegration experience is deeply multisensory. In the midst of a normal day, Phillip might catch a scent of diesel gasoline, and it instantly transports him back to western Afghanistan. When driving through El Paso, Texas, or Palm Springs, California, during a vacation, he sees mountain ranges in a desert environment, and he is instantly reminded of

driving in Afghanistan. In his current private security job, when communicating on a radio, he hears radio call signs and the static breaking up between voices, and he is instantly taken back to his time in the military. Phillip may want to forget his MIE, but the memories continue to return and remind him of what he did.

Phillip's MIE is consistent with Shay's organizational understanding of moral injury outlined in chapters 1 and 2. Shay argues that for an MIE to occur, three things all need to happen: (1) there has to be a betrayal of what is morally right, (2) by someone who holds legitimate authority, and (3) in a high-stakes situation.⁷ Phillip felt betrayed by his command during an incident that he now must reckon with as a betrayal of what he believes is right. The entire opening chapter of Shay's first text, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, centers on "bad leadership" as "a cause of combat trauma."⁸ Shay argues that Homer's *Iliad* is a narrative of coming to terms with failed leadership. The connection, for Shay, comes from taking the Greek word *thémis*, which can mean *character, fairness, loyalty*, or *morality*, and expanding its meaning, through his analysis of the Homeric narratives, to include "what's right."⁹

Shay specifically unpacks his concept of moral injury as a soldier's "fiduciary assumption."¹⁰ Shay connects a modern soldier's dependence on other soldiers as somewhat anathema to the soldiers of the Homeric narratives. The Homeric soldier, in Shay's estimation, depended on himself and not on "a chain of people he would never meet."¹¹ In opposition to this, Shay describes the Vietnam experience as follows:

⁷ Shay, "Moral Injury," *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 183.

⁸ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 196.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The vast and distant military and civilian structure that provides a modern soldier with his orders, arms, ammunition, food, water, information, training, and fire support is ultimately a moral structure, a *fiduciary*, a trustee holding the life and safety of that soldier. The need for an intact moral world increases with every added coil of a soldier's moral dependency on others. The vulnerability of the soldier's moral world has vastly increased in three millennia.¹²

Phillip, I think, would agree. Phillip, as a truck driver, was vulnerable and dependent on intelligence gathering for the safety of his route. Phillip depended on a lieutenant who not only knew the SOPs, but also knew mitigating factors when things went awry. Phillip was not angry with his lieutenant though; Phillip saw the leader's action for what it was: a split-second decision that Phillip must now process.

Rarely in my interviews with Phillip did he speak about systemic failures of the US military in Afghanistan. During a couple of moments, especially after he shared his MIE, I thought he would move toward a critique of the system. In my estimation and experience, it is precisely the system that warrants a critique. Phillip's unit had mitigating procedures that would have prevented the entire incident, but they were not utilized. Upon reflection, I believe Phillip was not hiding his critique. I think he was not aware that the critique could be offered. In chapters 5 and 6, I note that, within the liberative praxis methods of this dissertation, this is precisely an opportunity for military chaplains to function as Gramscian intellectuals supporting counterhegemonic communities. Intellectuals lend their intellectual resources, when appropriate, to strengthen the counterhegemonic cause.

At this point, a caveat is necessary. It would not be advisable for military chaplains to impose their own political critiques onto service members and veterans, just as they would not impose their own religious commitments. The mission of the counterhegemonic community is to

¹² Ibid., 15.

offer a community that veterans and civilians are not finding in other spaces. This community, however, does maintain a critical lens.

Speaking to this interaction with Phillip by way of example, much of the material Phillip was transporting from base to base was deconstructed building material; Phillip was told he and his unit were some of the last service members to be in Afghanistan. Phillip thought his missions were to assist in the tearing down of bases and to reduce the footprint of the United States in Afghanistan. However, when we did the interviews in 2018, the United States was still in Afghanistan, and the Taliban had more territory than at any other point in the war. I think Shay's analysis of moral injury at the organizational level can be levied against the entire military-industrial complex. Service members continue to die in Iraq, Afghanistan, and myriad other countries with no end in sight; this is a moral injury—a lack of clear mission is its own deep betrayal. Within liberative praxis, there is a responsibility to present the realities of these critiques. Now, if I were to impose my systemic critique on Phillip's narrative—without an invitation—I would be deploying violence onto his story. All this is to say that there is an inherent tension when considering the most liberative way to critique systems from within counterhegemonic communities, a tension that I attempt to assuage in chapter 6.

As we turn to the themes that emerge in Phillip's reintegration, it could be useful to remember Shay's statement that "moral injury is an essential part of any combat trauma that leads to lifelong psychological injury. Veterans can usually recover from horror, fear, and grief once they return to civilian life, so long as 'what's right' has not also been violated."¹³ Phillip's MIE became a moral injury when the moral pain and moral dissonances were not properly processed. Phillip knew at the time that what he did was wrong, but he recounted the event in such a way that he could not have acted any differently. However, it was only when he

¹³ Ibid., 20.

reintegrated post-deployment and had other bouts of post-traumatic stress that the full weight of that incident set in. Through hours of interviewing, coding, and analyzing, three distinct themes of alienation emerged: belonging, the isolation and difficulty of reintegrating within the context of a civilian and military divide, and a deep theological betrayal. I will address them in turn.

Analysis of Phillip's Reserve Military Service: Alienation

Belonging: Coming Home as an "Amateur" Soldier

When Phillip returned home after his deployment, he expected a celebration. More specifically, he expected a parade with balloons and city leadership to be at the unit welcoming him home. However, this was not the case. There was a small reception at the unit, but it was haphazard and thrown together. As the chartered bus approached the unit, there were families and friends holding signs: "We missed you, daddy!" "Welcome home, mommy!" "Sergeant Anderson is our hero!" The unit, though, were scrambling to get the grill working. The festivities, which everyone had known about for months had somehow fallen through the cracks. The battalion commander was not present at the reception. The only soldiers present, who were not members of the deployed force, were a handful of fulltime soldiers who worked at the unit. Phillip had envisioned how this day would go, but it was turning into a disaster.

He felt a similar nervous energy that he experienced driving trucks outside the wire now that he was looking for Vicki in the crowd. He was full of adrenaline and appropriate nerves. He had not seen Vicki in nine months. He found her in the crowd (her sign read: "I love my soldier!"), ran to her, and hugged her. After the hug, they left. They did not stay for the festivities. They did not stay for the hot dogs and hamburgers. Phillip had Vicki drive, and she gave him a perplexed glance. Phillip *always* drove. He reasoned with her that it had been a long day, and he was tired.

Phillip took some time off from his responsibilities as a reservist, and when he came back to drill two months later he was surprised how much had changed. The unit had, for all intents and purposes, moved on. In his absence, the unit had to fill slots. This is a normal phenomenon of a deployed reserve unit: the mission goes on even at home station (the unit at home station is sometimes referred to as “rear detachment”), and therefore people are needed in each slot. When the deploying unit returns home, there is some tension with regards to who gets the responsibility. Phillip noted that “the unit treated us like nothing, I didn’t feel like I mattered. It all just felt different.” Phillip recalls a new soldier, probably around nineteen-years-old, who was getting to the unit after his training at Fort Jackson. Phillip pulled him aside, and like a potential mentor offered his support. “I want to teach you what it is really like. How we really do things over there.” The young soldier looked at Phillip with rejection; at least that is how Phillip felt. He thanked Phillip, but he knew what he was doing. Phillip simultaneously felt his heart sink and his disappointment and anger rise. What was his purpose now? Phillip was quick to clarify that new faces were not necessarily the problem. He was perfectly able to work with new soldiers, and train them based on his experience. However, what he found were new soldiers that didn’t care that Phillip had deployed—they didn’t ask for his experience. It was at this point that Phillip noted that his service in Afghanistan did not matter. The atmosphere was one in which every soldier was on the same level; Phillip was just as competent as that brand-new soldier fresh out of Advanced Individual Training. He experienced this as a failure of leadership: the officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) did not do enough to properly reintegrate the veterans back into the unit. There was no recognition of what these individuals did in Afghanistan. To this, Phillip noted:

You are only used and are here for a reason for a certain season. Once your time is done, *you* are done. All right, thank you, that’s it! You are left with all these

emotions and experiences that you bring home and what do I do with that? You know, what do you do with it? You get back [to the unit] and there is just... you know... you are just expected to get back into “drill mode.” You are lumped in with everyone – even those who didn’t deploy. They don’t know anything. We were thrown back to the mix. They should have used our experience, but we were just like everyone else...

I can sympathize with Phillip. The army prides itself on teaching the latest “TTPs” (tactics, techniques, and procedures), and for an FSC element not to learn what is actually happening in Afghanistan is negligent.

This season of Phillip’s life was filled with disillusionment: the institution that previously provided so much of his identity now is a source of his alienation. He decided that his career in the reserves was no longer viable and put in his paperwork to get out. It took more than a year for Phillip to get out of his reserve contract. The problem? Phillip’s commander had not signed the paperwork. It sat on the commander’s desk for twelve months. Phillip had assumed that it was up in the ethereal army stratosphere getting signed and passed around the Pentagon, but little did he know that, his paperwork was in the office building, just mere feet away from where he drilled each month. This point in my interviews with Phillip was the first time I experienced his anger. With a red face and voice rising, he was angry that he had to go directly to his commander—who did not deploy with him—and ask why he had not signed it. For a lower enlisted Specialist to go and talk to an officer and commander (a Captain), and request him to sign basic paperwork is inappropriate in military culture. An officer is expected to take care of his or her soldiers, and if an issue should arise, the proper chain of command is in place to mitigate inappropriate interactions. Phillip should never have been in a position to complete this task. His Platoon Sergeant should have gone on his behalf. Once it was signed, though, Phillip was out of the army in a matter of weeks. In Phillip’s opinion this was a failure of his unit’s

leadership. He experienced their failure of not only “disrespecting” a combat veteran but also not taking care of the basic administrative details needed to function as a unit.

Once Phillip was out of the military, I expected him to miss his service. There were times when he would get nostalgic about service; yet, it was more complicated than that. Phillip does miss his “combat family,” and he certainly misses the feeling of being needed.¹⁴ However, for all the times that Phillip had reflections like this, he had just as many that centered on his family at home and how he would never want to go back to Afghanistan. I asked Phillip what I can see in retrospect was a leading question: whether he would go back to Afghanistan if the opportunity presented itself. After a long pause, he replied, “No way. It is a young man’s game. I have my family and have too much to lose.” He reached for his wallet and pulled out a picture of his granddaughter, at this point around eighteen-months-old, and with tears in his eyes, said, “I need to be here for her. Someone needs to watch *Frozen* with her.”

Phillip felt alienated not only from his unit but also from the society around him. I asked Phillip at the end of our third interview if he were to give advice to a reserve service member transitioning to civilian life, in terms of expectations, what he would say. He replied:

They don’t care about your service – some may thank you. But, truly, they don’t care about your service. Kids are hyped to kill like *American Sniper*, and want to know what combat and killing are like. I work with a guy who is a disabled vet and another co-worker said, “So, I don’t care. Why should I care? You all volunteered for it!” I wanted to punch him in his face! To serve in the military is not an easy task! I am with my third therapist because of how hard this shit is! No, they don’t care.

Within that complex paragraph is exactly what drives this dissertation: there is a level of dissonance that Phillip experienced with civilians *and* the military. They may thank him for his service, and he feels some gratitude for their words, but it is their actions that reveal their true

¹⁴ M. Jan Holton, *Longing for Home: Forced Displacement and the Postures of Hospitality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 131.

(lack of) appreciation. Phillip did not know this co-worker, but he had conversations with him in his head: “How dare you! You have no idea what it was like!” Phillip was instantly transported back to the roads of Afghanistan, and his MIE. He often goes back to this memory. He wakes when nightmares of that day creep into his sleep. In a cold sweat he jerks up and looks around his bedroom. The man in the car with the deep brown eyes is not peering into his soul. In the nightmare he hears a cry, which sounds like a small child. He distinctly remembers not seeing anyone exit the vehicle, but now he cannot remember what he did not see. Now, though, he wonders: Did I really volunteer for *that*? With that, I now transition to Phillip’s experience with society.

Society: Divided Identities

The theme of “divided identity” connected most directly to the ideological critique I am advocating and the five preliminary case study “issues” I brought to this dissertation:

- I*₁: How is the combat reintegration experience unique for reservists?
- I*₂: What is the relationship between being a reservist and reintegrating an MIE?
- I*₃: How does the spatial and temporal proximity of reservists to civilians impact reintegrating an MIE?
- I*₄: What is the relationship between reservist and family/friends post-deployment?
- I*₅: How do dominant ideologies impact the reintegration of an MIE?

I want to specifically handle *I*₂, *I*₄, and *I*₅ here as I have not yet discussed the direct role ideology and society played in shaping Phillip’s reintegration, or the impact of Phillip’s reintegration on his marriage. Phillip’s alienation from the army introduced a unique experience of being a reservist and attempting to reintegrate an MIE. After the deployment, the individuals that perhaps understood Phillip the best “went their separate ways.” His mentor, Sergeant First Class Eric Clausen, a blonde surfer from San Diego who joined the military at eighteen to travel the country, was direct, tough, but always dependable. He taught Phillip more efficient ways to clean his truck; he taught Phillip easier ways to get Wi-Fi access in remote Afghanistan; and, he taught

Phillip how to be a deployed husband. Phillip wanted to *be* a SFC Clausen to the new soldier he met when he returned to drill. When the unit returned to the United States, Clausen transferred, but did not say good-bye. Transferring is not atypical for a restructuring unit: reservists went back to school, took new jobs, or simply just went away for a while to reconnect. Phillip was left, alone, to reintegrate into civilian life. This reintegration was difficult and is still ongoing.

Phillip is torn when he discusses society. On the one hand, he is appreciative of most people who thank him. Remember, above, he stated, “Some people thank me, and I thank them for their appreciation.” He wants to believe that people are appreciative of his service and sacrifice, but with some groups of civilians, their actions tell him otherwise. Phillip can feel it when ideology is functioning. The handshakes are flimsy. The eye contact is non-existent. Phillip believes that his generation is “the last one to get a thank you.” Gratitude, for Phillip, is complex. Ungratefulness, on the other hand, is a simple act of dishonor. Phillip recounts one story he “can’t get over”:

I had these two conversations with people that I can’t get over. This one dude told me, “we shouldn’t even be there. You all are fighting a lost cause.” I was so pissed, what has that guy ever done?! I do work with a lot of vets, and they get it. One former Navy SEAL told me to keep my head down. His last words to me were, “don’t get killed.” He was the coolest dude. He was a Vietnam vet, and he was called a “baby killer” when he came home. He told me, “These people don’t realize that I killed somebody yesterday, and could kill you today and not even blink an eye.” These people are so lucky. He did the job. I was just a reservist... Guys like that helped me get through.

I met this woman; it was around Christmas time, as I was walking into the mall. I was wearing a unit t-shirt from Afghanistan. She said, “When did you serve?” I explained that I just got back, and am in the Reserves. She looked confused and said, “we send the Reserves to war?” What the hell was that?!

Even in that vignette, Phillip is quick to dismiss his own service as not as valiant or as worthy of gratitude as a Navy SEAL from Vietnam. In both situations, he feels himself to be, less than, and others convey minimization as well. He is not a Navy SEAL, and he is not active duty. His part-

time status in the Reserve component separates him. From these interactions, Phillip decided that it is better to internalize his service, and not share it. The people he meets either do not understand the complexity of military service, or only want to hear about the special operators (The “Operators,” as they are colloquially referred) because these operators are the ones the movies are about. Operators killed Osama Bin Laden. Operators have television shows (*The Unit* or *SEAL Team*) and movies (*Zero Dark Thirty*, *Lone Survivor*, or *American Sniper*) made about them. Operators are elite.

Phillip returns in his mind to Afghanistan: leading convoys on Afghanistan highways. He recalls one specific mission in which they came upon an IED. This was not a test. Phillip hears in his headset, “I got something back here. I see wires!” Phillip recalls experiencing tunnel vision. He wanted to collapse into himself, and hide. He knew, though, that he had a responsibility to the convoy. The SOP dictated that they radio the EOD team (Explosive Ordnance Disposal). What the SOP did not dictate was how to handle the boredom of waiting hours in the heat for EOD to arrive. Phillip “kept his cool” and told those around him to “keep your head on a swivel.” Phillip was mentally alert and attuned to everything around him. He noticed a flicker of light out of his peripheral vision, and quickly got his rifle ready. He was relieved when it was merely a young woman walking with her mother. EOD finally came and casually walked up to the IED site and blew it in place (BIP). The convoy was “Charlie Mike.” Phillip shared numerous stories like this, in attempt to show that in Afghanistan—in combat—it does not matter what type of unit or from what component you deploy: war is war.

These exchanges also highlight the importance of perspective when Phillip discusses his service. The perspective spoke to two aspects in particular: first, Phillip carried a new personal understanding of perspective in civilian life. He understood that “all this could be taken away.”

Second, he still dismisses his service as not as worthy of appreciation as that of the Navy SEAL. Phillip appreciates that there are others *who were called on to “do” even more*.

One of most poignant reintegration experiences for Phillip happened at a mall, as it so often does for a reintegrating veteran. The mall is the battleground for the military and civilian divide. Former Marine, Phil Klay describes the mall as:

Back home was shopping malls and strip clubs. Over here was death and violence and hope and despair. Back home was fast food and high-fructose corn syrup. Over here, we had bodies flooding the rivers of Iraq until people claimed it changed the taste of the fish. Back home they had aisles filled wall to wall with toothpaste, shaving cream, deodorant, and body spray. Over here, sweating under the desert sun, we smelled terrible. We were at war, they were at the mall... There’s something bizarre about being a veteran of a war that doesn’t end, in a country that doesn’t pay attention.¹⁵

Following the conversation with the woman above, Phillip continues shopping for Christmas presents and describes American children pleading with their parents for toys—pulling on their parent’s arms and legs for more. “Can I have that, mom? Please!” “You said if I was good Santa would bring this game!” Phillip was surrounded by the deafening sound of kids screaming about what toys they wanted. He then shows me pictures of children in Afghanistan, barefoot, that he met when he was outside the wire. Deafening screaming to a peaceful photograph. He remembers this one boy, only wearing one shoe, throwing rocks. He became angry with the American kids and laments to me vicariously: “You have nothing to complain about. I am more thankful and grateful now. The fathers are out in the field working just so the kids can eat dinner that night.” Just as Phillip felt isolated from reservists in his unit, Phillip now felt isolated from Americans when he went shopping.

The last element of this theme that is instructive and speaks to the ambiguity of these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is how to handle veteran reintegration when the sheer number of

¹⁵ Phil Klay, “The Warrior at the Mall,” *New York Times*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/opinion/sunday/the-warrior-at-the-mall.html>.

veterans increases. Phillip can admit and emphasize that that civilians just do not know what to say—even after eighteen years of war. What comes out instead is, “wow, you must have had it rough...” or, “thank you for your service...” Phillip felt those ideological sentiments as empty signifiers that did not mean anything. In his mind, society does not really think about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan because we have been fighting for long.

In the midst of not feeling understood within society, Phillip remained special to his family. He seldom talked about how difficult it was reintegrating with his children; however, his marriage was the source of much strife. From his family’s perspective, not much changed initially while Phillip was deployed. A critical thing to realize about the modern Iraq and Afghanistan deployment is the level of comfort and predictability soldiers experience; they are always connected to their families. Phillip’s FOB, just like mine, had Wi-Fi; he could message his family at any hour of the day. This, of course, is a powerful asset for service members to connect quickly, yet it also has severe implications. One implication is trying to communicate the daily reality of what combat encompasses. The deployed service member will typically *always* have the story to tell that is “more pressing” or “more important” than the spouse or loved one back home. An IED attack always takes precedence over a long line at the post office. Because of that, Phillip ignored his family, or at least he tried. There is a latent conflict: the people he wants to understand him cannot because he is not entirely willing to divulge his complete narrative. He would send Facebook messages or texts, but they never knew when he went on missions. When he returned, his family was eager to catch up. His family was ecstatic to see him, but Phillip felt isolated, as “they didn’t get it.” The family wanted to celebrate in public, at a bar or restaurant, but he did not want to. The anxiety of being around people became too much. The once-social Phillip was no longer social. Phillip had changed.

Phillip's newfound intuition to stay home and not go out and visit with friends and family became too much of a stressor on his marriage. Phillip started drinking more heavily. He would watch his unit's deployment DVD, drink whiskey, and replay "what ifs": what if the Taliban would have overran the base? What if the Afghan National Police opened fire? What if I would have hit an IED? The drinking, the isolation, and the changing temperament were too much for Vicki, and she told Phillip she was moving out. He looks down at his hands, rubbing them together calmly, and simply states, "She said I changed." He became more forgetful. He was not attentive to her needs. He is perplexed about this as well; this is not the Phillip he knows, or wants to be. He used to be a man who "went with life more. I didn't sweat the small stuff." Those four months from Vicki apart tested Phillip's resolve perhaps more than the deployment. He haphazardly described it as:

Those four months killed me. I lost a ton of weight. The not-knowing... I couldn't sleep. I felt sick all the time. I didn't know how to express myself. She wasn't listening to me. I felt like my feelings didn't matter. Everything was "you, you, you"—what about my feelings? I finally said to her, "just come home." She did, and we worked on things. I do snap sometimes when she asks questions! Why do I have to answer everything—she is not my mom! I try not to sweat the small stuff.

Once Vicki returned, Phillip started to take his reintegration seriously. This would include: three VA therapists, medication for a new PTSD diagnosis, and new patterns of thinking. Phillip knows that he is a different man than before he deployed. Now, though, he wants Vicki to know that he "goes to the VA and realize that this is your husband now. He is here working on it. I am working. My family is everything, and I am not going to lose them again. Although the doctor said I will have it [PTSD] forever. You just learn to deal with it. I thought I was doing great. It just kept getting worse." Phillip is taking the steps to work on his marriage. Phillip, however, is having more difficulty working on his relationship with God.

My God, My God Why Have You Forsaken Me?

Phillip's alienation from God during reintegration surprised him the most. He experienced a deep internal theological change when he returned home. He felt this alienation as betrayal. He was confident that God would always guide him. Phillip relied on—and felt like the prophet—Jeremiah, in which God would provide a plan of welfare and hope (referencing the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29:11); Phillip was proud that he, like Isaiah, stood up and was sent into harm's way (referencing the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6:8); finally, Phillip had been confident that God would strengthen him to do all things (referencing Saint Paul from Philippians 4:13). These texts and others functioned as “life verses” for what he was doing in the army: God empowers warriors. That God, however, stays behind in Afghanistan. With more confusion and pregnant pauses, he eventually describes his pain:

I am still trying to figure it out. I don't know. I had the chapel services and Bible studies. I don't have a connection anymore. I felt, almost, thrown into the world over there. When I think about it now I still just get more confused. I still try to pray every day and I thank God for my life—and my grandbaby. That is a *real* joy in my life. I can thank God for that. I still, though, don't know about my daily life and forget that God is here with me now. There is something about how serious everything was in Afghanistan, with faith, with family, with my own life.

I followed this up with, “was God with you in Afghanistan?”

Yes! I felt strong because of him. I had people around me who held me up. People held me up. Little things like prayers before missions always helped me feel ready. I would leave the gate knowing that God was with me. In the middle of a mission—like when we broke down in the middle of a valley—I didn't necessarily feel abandoned. When I got home, though, I felt abandoned by everything.

During reintegration, Phillip started to describe God as distant. Perhaps it is more apropos to describe this distance emerging *in* Afghanistan, but Phillip had to come to terms with this God's absence once the alienation surrounded him during his reintegration. Phillip did not feel like he had a prosperous hope (returning to Jeremiah), and he certainly did not feel as though he could

do all things (returning to Philippians). Phillip had dedicated his life to Jesus and had a community of believers around him, but this did not prevent terrible things from happening.

Phillip continues to visualize his MIE and, in particular, the man's eyes. He thought his deployment was necessary to help the people of Afghanistan, as I too believed after him, because that was a dominant ideology we were immersed within, but all around him he saw fatigue, corruption, and death. Phillip needs a God that could not only reckon with that reality, but a God that was present in that experience and in his reintegration experiences. This vision of God is possible, and as Dietrich Bonhoeffer quipped: "Only the suffering God can help."¹⁶

Religious Resources

I want to transition to the religious resources that sustained Phillip's faith in Afghanistan: prayer, a religious community, and music.

Prayer: Crying Out into the Abyss

Phillip's prayer life after returning from his deployment was another indication that something was off. Prayer used to be natural—almost second nature to Phillip. Now, it was reminiscent of his entire alienated faith journey. Phillip described this: "When I think about faith and prayer, I am still confused. My faith was done. Why did God send me there? I was so strong before. Why is it gone now?" Phillip could not commune with God because he felt as though the connection was severed. More than severed, though, Phillip's spiritual practices of prayer were mired within his inability to concentrate. Phillip notes that a side effect of his PTSD is "I have a hard time thinking. I get caught up in my talking. Even right now. It is hard for me to speak. I lose my train of thought. So, I start praying, but then forget what I am praying about." It became easier to stop altogether as he did not have people in his life to walk through enacting new

¹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1997), 361.

practices of mindfulness or centering himself to pray again. When I asked Phillip if he wanted to continue praying, he answered desperately, “of course!” Phillip is still looking for connection to other people who are either a) Christians who “get it” or b) veterans who “get it,” and if those two could coalesce that would be preferred.

Religious Community: The Search for Solidarity

When Phillip returned home, he felt isolated from his spiritual battle buddies who had accompanied him through some of most trying times of his life. People at his local church just could not compare. I have already detailed the importance of chapel in Phillip’s life. Chapel was a constant religious experience in which he felt nourished, welcomed, and challenged. He held the various military chaplains up in admiration; these men and women were Phillip’s heroes. Even in my interactions with Phillip, I felt an instant rapport when he learned I, too, had been to Afghanistan—and as a chaplain. Chaplains lived a similar deployment experience as him. They could understand what he was experiencing. When Phillip attempted to reintegrate into American Christian life he was surprised how much had changed for him. The sermons seemed shallow. The pastors preached about money—a *lot*. Importantly, the pastors were not military chaplains. As they were not chaplains, Phillip was not willing to follow them, or even take their advice. A natural by-product of feeling alienated is reversing it: Phillip no longer wanted to spend time with people who did not get it. The entire experience left him searching for what he had in Afghanistan. This is a journey he is still on. Phillip’s reintegration and spiritual interventions are still communally possible. In chapters 5 and 6 I note that within the liberative praxis methods of this dissertation this is precisely an opportunity for military chaplains to function as Gramscian “intellectuals” supporting counterhegemonic communities. It is from within the veteran community that support and intervention can thrive.

Music

I saved music for the end because music is the space in which Phillip experiences not only his truest self, but an experience that also includes God. Phillip had always been into heavy metal. He played the guitar, and enjoyed heavy rock music with good guitar riffs. He had been in bands throughout his youth and late adolescence, and even “jammed” with other adults as he grew older. When he became a Christian he thought that season of his life was over. He assumed that Christian music would be more akin to hymns than to Metallica. However, he found Christian heavy metal. In our first interview, Phillip brought up how important the band Kutless was for him during his deployment. He describes that his morning routine *always* included “blasting Kutless.” He had the music loaded on his phone and would listen while working out and when he had down time during a convoy. Kutless enabled Phillip to have a religious connection while also staying true to his passion for loud guitars and heavier, faster music. A previous unit left an old acoustic guitar in Phillip’s living area, and he would pick it up from time to time and play Kutless songs.

Later in my interviews with Phillip, I asked more specifically what it was about Kutless that spoke to him. I was curious whether or not certain albums influenced him, or if other bands had a similar gravitas in his life. Kutless was a band he shared with his twenty-two-year-old daughter. He got emotional describing driving her to school listening to two Kutless albums: 2009’s *It is Well* and 2014’s *Glory*. She would hop into his pickup truck and immediately turn on Kutless. Phillip’s responsibilities were to roll down the windows and get ready to sing along. With the windows down, the brisk autumn air rolling in, they would sing together—as loud as they could—and smile at each other after each song.

After one drive, she told him she wanted to get baptized. They had been going to church as a family for about a year. The pastor asked if Phillip wanted to participate in her baptism, and he was ecstatic. They chose a song from Kutless's 2009 album *It is Well* as a dedication song in her baptismal service. *It is Well*, is a worship album with classic worship hymns remixed and sped up with detuned guitars and fast drums. When he first heard the album, he could not believe the power it provided. During that baptism he felt closer to God than he had previously. Kutless "had everything for me: family, God, and heavy."

When he got home, though, music was no longer an asset. While talking about Kutless, Phillip said, "let me tell you a story":

I didn't play my guitar for three years after I got home. I was numb... Like my hands too... I had no creativity. Three years. My old drummer that I used to jam with before deployment called me up. I had been avoiding him, but he kept calling. It was the medicine I needed. We jammed, and like never stopped. The emotion was so strong in me that when we stopped playing I started crying. It was a release. This is it. I couldn't find myself when I came home. I lived a life in Afghanistan that I didn't know if I was coming home. Would I make it out alive? That little deployment did a lot of changes in my life – I didn't think it would, but it did.

I asked Phillip if he thought music was waiting for him. With tears in his eyes, he said, "It was waiting for me." The complexity of Phillip's reintegration experience provides a canvas for further theoretical exploration. Phillip's alienation and subjectification within a totalizing neoliberal hegemony demand a serious account. Through a revised praxis method of correlation, and Lartey's liberative praxis, chapter 5 now asks new questions, posits answers to some of Phillip's questions, and uses Phillip's questions to reform and reconceptualize those resources. Ultimately the goal is to offers a critical dialogue between cultural studies and theology.

Implications for Practical Theology and This Project

I close this chapter by elaborating on a plea I laid out in chapter 1. To properly reintegrate Phillip into society, I proposed, two steps: first, Phillip needs a space in which he can fully articulate and “re-author”¹⁷ his MIE, and second, military chaplains (primarily) and practical and pastoral theologians (secondarily) must critique the ideology of American military service to create space for proper reintegration. I also mentioned in chapter 1 that greater collaboration is needed with civilian clergy. For all intents and purposes, Phillip does not talk to his old battalion chaplain from Afghanistan anymore. Once they both returned home, after their season together, each went their separate ways. How, then, can military chaplains—functioning as Gramscian intellectuals—creatively assist in preparing the veteran, the religious community, *and* civilians for a veteran’s homecoming?

Ultimately, if this critique of how cultural ideologies can amplify an existing moral injury is not properly dealt with, Phillip will continue to receive a hollow “you must have had it rough,” or the liturgical platitude of “thank you for your service” while nothing changes at a cultural level. Phillip has experienced that platitude, and it did little to reintegrate him back into society. It is time to move forward in our practical theological method toward developing normative ways to appropriate theology within cultural studies’ use of ideology.

¹⁷ White, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, 61.

Chapter 5

The Centrality of Community in Moral Injury Support: Theological and Cultural Studies Analysis

My point is the need for a vision of moral injury that is intensely communal and requires a response that turns the church into a verb, where women and men join the burden of veterans as their burden and carries the weight of memory together.¹

— Willie J. Jennings

There is such a thing as pastoral theology: it is the theology that sheds the light of the saving world on the reality of injustice so as to inspire the church to struggle for liberation.²

— Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff

This chapter operationalizes the latter tasks of Lartey's liberative praxis outlined in chapter 3, while also maintaining a commitment to the approach of a revised praxis method of correlation. Throughout this chapter I will work through Phillip's experience (Lartey's first task of liberative praxis), using these liberative praxis and practical theological methods with a theological and sociological conception of community from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. To better interpret the data from chapter 4, this chapter is broken into two parts: in Part 1, I more formally return to Stuart Hall's analysis of ideology. This theoretical background unpacks how Hall's ideological analysis assists in rethinking—and ultimately opposing via spiritual practices—dominant cultural ideologies surrounding military service. After a theoretical introduction, Phillip's questions and concerns are brought more formally into the dialogue. Phillip's experience assists in identifying how media imaging impacted his MIE and its reintegration.

¹ Willie James Jennings, "War Bodies: Remembering Bodies in a Times of War," in *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*, ed. Stephanie N. Arel and Shelly Rambo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 33.

² Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. Paul Burns (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 17.

Part 2 attends to the theological side of interpretation, namely an examination of Bonhoeffer's sociological ecclesiology as a lens to better conceptualize the liberative praxis functions of the communal-contextual spiritual care paradigm. I will focus primarily on Bonhoeffer's first published work, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (*Sanctorum Communio: Eine dogmatische Untersuchung zur Soziologie der Kirche*).³ To better facilitate our conversations, I will start to put together the pieces of how Hall's "oppositional" reading of ideological texts is not only possible, but provides a pathway toward healing via counterhegemonic communities.

Part 1. Return to Ideology

In his interactions with civilians and some active duty personnel, Phillip understood that his military service was something *other*. Of the three dominant themes unpacked in chapter 4, Phillip's second theme, his divided identity within society, is most prescient at present. My return to Hall's ideology is strengthened with Phillip's analysis in mind. Phillip knew that he did not compare with the "hero" elite "operators" that civilians valorized, and therefore Phillip's questioning, and his reintegration, critiques a dominant ideological production of these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In chapter 4 he detailed an interaction in which he came to the realization,

They don't care about your service – some may thank you. But, truly, they don't care about your service. Kids are hyped to kill like *American Sniper*, and want to know what combat and killing are like. I work with a guy who is a disabled vet and another co-worker said, "So, I don't care. Why should I care? You all volunteered for it!" I wanted to punch him in his face! To serve in the military is not an easy task! I am with my third therapist because of how hard this shit is! No, they don't care.

Phillip was encountering ideology. Young men, in particular, want to enlist to become like their heroes, such as Navy SEAL operator Chris Kyle, protagonist in *American Sniper*. In chapter 2's

³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 1, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Joachim Von Soosten, Reinhard Kraus, and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

literature review I set a genealogy from Marx's ideology critique through Althusser and Gramsci to highlight my primary cultural studies conversation partner: Stuart Hall. I have only provided a brief note about his biography and *theorizing*, as it is now appropriate to explore his ideology work at greater detail.

Oppositional Readings as Resistance

Hall, contra Marx, posits that cultural forms (e.g., the media or advertising) are not simply reducible to a superstructure related to an ideologically driven economic base. Rather, for Hall, culture represents constitutive elements of society as a whole. Hall eliminates the rigidity that Marx and later Marxists posit between the base-superstructure paradigm.

As noted in chapter 2, for Hall, ideology is not a false consciousness, but rather, a socially constructed site of struggle. Therefore, as I started to unpack in chapter 2, all that can be done is choosing how to function within ideologies. The question becomes *which* ideological frameworks we engage—rather than focusing on how to escape them. Ideology is “a function of the discourse and of the logic of social processes, rather than an intention of the agent.”⁴ Ideology cannot be explained, but remains partly unconscious.

Hall, as with Gramsci, insists that ideology resides in both language and the common sense of the culture. Further, through a thorough analysis of hegemony one can locate how vectors of power attain dominance. One space in which common sense is produced is within mass media. The media “serve, in societies like ours, ceaselessly to perform the critical ideological work of ‘classifying out the world’ within the discourse of the dominant ideologies.”⁵

The goal, then, is to examine how hegemonic forces ideologically shape media to maintain commonsense consent. In chapter 1, I discussed the discourse around the NFL's use of

⁴ Stuart Hall, “The Rediscovery of ‘Ideology’: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies,” in *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed. Michael Gurevitch (New York: Methuen, 1982), 88.

⁵ Hall, “‘Ideological Effect’,” 346.

the national anthem, and I will continue to unpack that phenomenon through an analysis of Hall's encoding/decoding. Further, I will discuss how ideology generates certain types of veterans in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through the hegemonic "readings" of war films. Hall's analysis and usage of the media offers a practical and tangible way to understand, not only hegemony, but also discursive practices in spite of hegemony. The media, for Hall, "touches the lives of a great number of people in the society..." and at "the deeper level, the use of the media to provide imaginative experiences through various forms of art and entertainment has a modifying impact upon young people's attitudes and values."⁶

For Hall, media classifies the world within four ideological roles. First, media participates in producing social knowledge. Media, then, have "colonized the cultural and ideological sphere."⁷ In their colonization, media creates images that groups and classes can project their lives onto. In other words, media's imaging and social knowledge constructs for groups an image of the world, or *lived* realities of groups, that is the world.

Second, media reflect on the plurality of the different worlds. The plurality comes into play as the media is tasked with filing and mapping the variety of life (this is as simple as region, classes, cities, neighborhoods, or minority interest groups) as there does not exist a universal ideological discourse. Media, then, looks to reflect on the "inventory of the lexicons, life-styles, and ideologies which are objectified there."⁸ Third, similar to Gramsci, media is tasked with producing consensus and consent. Media can hold minority opinions and views that produce an illusion of objectivity. In this third role, Hall notes that ideology functions to produce "consensus,

⁶ Hall and Whannel, *The Popular Arts*, 20.

⁷ Hall, "'Ideological Effect'," 340.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 341.

the construction of legitimacy—not so much the finished article itself, but the whole process of argument, exchange, debate, consultation and speculation by which it emerges....”⁹

Fourth, and vitally for this dissertation, the media operates *independently* of the state. However, this does not mean that dominant state ideologies do not creep into media’s imaging. Hall’s point, though, is that “counter-vailing” voices can emerge. Events that the media report on do not *just happen*; they, through the media, are “made intelligible.”¹⁰ For Hall, events are made intelligible through encoding, as the process by which a preferred ideological reading follows. There are limits to interpretation in how these products are encoded. The producers cannot have a “perfectly transparent communication” in how a message is decoded, and this is why the lived experience of the individual decoding a product is critical for interpretation.¹¹ The “repertoire” of codes and the application of meaning are from dominant ideologies. This is not necessarily a conscious decision, but is from a stream of meaning. It is, however, because the stream of meaning is within common sense and consensus, they appear as though they are the only available meaning. Hall, thus, often refers to ideology as unconscious. Reporters, or other “professionals” within mass media, act as if they are pursuing the values of their institution; however, they are actually functioning within a dominant ideology. Where are the sites of resistance within this consensus and dominant ideology?

Encoding/Decoding

In another of Hall’s key essays, “Encoding/Decoding,” he argues against Althusser’s view in which specific meanings are written into texts and are decoded perfectly on the other end. People decode from their social locations (Hall’s “plurality” mentioned above). Althusser’s view fails to account for ways in which *both* ends of the production (encoding *and* decoding) distort

⁹ Ibid., 342.

¹⁰ Ibid., 343.

¹¹ Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” 136.

meaning. Hall critiques linear models of communication theory that progresses from sender to receiver via a message. Importantly, the linear model fails to account for the social and political implications of discourse. In its place, Hall favors a circuit. Hall emphasizes the activity—rather than passivity—of discourse.

Therefore, ideology is also in the product's decoding. It is precisely this potentiality in which holistically reintegrating Phillip (and other veterans) with moral injury *is* possible. Decoding, then, is the result of a disrupted variety of textual readings. Hall defines decoding as, “before this message can have an ‘effect’ (however defined), satisfy a ‘need’ or be put to a ‘use’, it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded.”¹² The process of decoding is not as simple as unpacking encoded messaging; rather, Hall proposes three “hypothetical” reading positions of decoding's construction: “dominant-hegemonic,” “negotiated,” and “oppositional.”¹³

First, in the dominant-hegemonic, Hall, utilizing his Gramscianism, describes how the media texts of a culture are infused with the ideology of a dominant group. This is a tangible example of how Gramscian consent affects everyday life. The messaging is decoded exactly how the encoded message was intended. These viewers are “operating inside the dominant code,” and according to Gramsci's common sense.¹⁴ The producers of these messages operate by a “professional code” of experts.¹⁵ A dominant-hegemonic reading of the national anthem kneeling controversy is the binary rhetoric to either stand out of respect for military Service Members, or get penalized (or, worse, “leave the country”). The dominant-hegemonic logic understands NFL players as wealthy and detached from the concerns of these oppressed communities and that

¹² Ibid., 130.

¹³ Ibid., 136.

¹⁴ Ibid., 136.

¹⁵ Ibid.

therefore the kneeling is out of a selfish attempt to elevate oneself. The dominant-hegemonic reading can be summed up as: shut up and play; or, “stick to sports.”¹⁶

The second reading position is a negotiated code. Simply put, “majority audiences probably understand quite adequately what has been dominantly defined and professionally signified.”¹⁷ These readings highlight contradiction and, “the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules—it operates with exceptions.”¹⁸ In the example of the national anthem, a negotiated reading would entail a decoding that can hold the nuance that the protest is about the brutality of American police forces on black and brown communities, but maintain that the players should protest in different ways.

Finally, Hall offers the possibility of a counterhegemonic and contrarian decoding of texts, which opposes the dominant-hegemonic position. These counterhegemonic positions of resistance are crucial, and they are imperative for this dissertation. Poignantly, Hall states, “he/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference.”¹⁹ The “oppositional” reading of the NFL protest would entail the critique that the conservative media’s response to the kneeling is *not* about supporting the military (abstractly through the anthem and flag); rather, the media’s response is about systemic racism and subjugation of black and brown communities.

The Dominant Ideologies of *American Sniper*

Returning more specifically to Phillip’s reintegration experience, let’s highlight Clint Eastwood’s *American Sniper* (2014) as a vignette. Remember, Phillip recounted stories in which

¹⁶ Howard Bryant, *The Heritage: Black Athletes, a Divided America, and the Politics of Patriotism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 9.

¹⁷ Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” 137.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 138.

special operation service members—“operators”—were used as the veteran par excellence during his reintegration experience, so it is prudent to run Eastwood’s *American Sniper* (2014) through Hall’s analysis. *American Sniper* is the story of the protagonist, Navy SEAL Chris Kyle—the “legend” of the Iraq war—becoming the “most lethal sniper in US military history.”²⁰ As a Navy SEAL, and therefore an operator, Kyle represented a type of veteran (a hero, from Moon’s typology) with which Phillip was compared. Phillip inherently understood a dominant ideology of films such as *American Sniper*—or at least its effects.

I am not interested in critiquing Eastwood’s film *as* film; rather, what I am interested in is what is happening at the level of ideological production that drew an estimated \$517 million dollars worldwide.²¹ Other films portray moral ambiguity in a more realistic and sobering manner (For example, Ang Lee’s 2016 *Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk*), but those films simply “don’t sell.” Suffice it to say, there is something about *American Sniper*—the ideological message it portrays, the ideological values it espouses, and the ideological patriotism it demands—that nudge one to take a closer look.

American Sniper tapped into aspects of war and collective memory that the public desired. This is Hall’s “encoding,” or what previously in 1964 he would have referred to as a “formula.” Speaking to that, Hall states, “‘mass culture’ is art that is machine-produced according to a formula.”²² Perhaps it is better to delineate *American Sniper* within the genre of western due to the blatantly obvious gunslinger killing “bad guys.” In the *New York Times* review of *American Sniper*, critic, A.O. Scott states that it upholds a Hollywood tradition of the “binary western film,”

²⁰ Taken from the subtitle of Kyle’s autobiography, Chris Kyle and Jim DeFelice, *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012).

²¹ Ben Beaumont-Thomas, “Clint Eastwood: *American Sniper* and I are anti-war,” *The Guardian*, March 17, 2015, accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/mar/17/clint-eastwood-american-sniper-anti-war>.

²² Hall and Whannel, *The Popular Arts*, 36.

and protagonist Chris Kyle's character throughout *American Sniper* is a binary (gun slinging) Navy SEAL who "despises the savage, despicable evil. That's what we were fighting in Iraq."²³ *American Sniper* attempts an apolitical stance toward the Iraq war and is an "expression of nostalgia" for President George W. Bush's foreign policy.²⁴

All this to say, *American Sniper* is an ideological film. As an ideologically encoded film, there is not much room for ambiguity. Foucault speaks to this overall problem of creating binary one-dimensional heroes while not detailing the entire experience when he states, "the problem's not the hero, but the struggle. Can you make a film about a struggle without going through the traditional process of creating heroes?"²⁵

Perhaps one could argue that *American Sniper* contains that struggle and the very resistance that I am advocating; namely, the traumatic after-effects of killing confronted (dare I say, haunted?) Chris Kyle. There could be an argument that people are talking about the war because of Eastwood's film. Eastwood himself can even argue that both he and *American Sniper* are anti-war, which he does in the aforementioned *Guardian* article, but I still contend that it is *precisely* in the encoding of *American Sniper* as an easy formulaic entertainment product of the culture industry that obfuscates the actual trauma of these wars, and exists as an ideological prop for the military-industrial complex. For example, the fact that Kyle struggled reintegrating at home is a reason he is a hero and deserves recognition. *That* sacrifice is part of the "formula" that Hall addresses; it is encoded in the film. It represents the "repertoire" of codes within the

²³ Kyle and DeFelice, *American Sniper*, 4.

²⁴ A.O. Scott, "Review: 'American Sniper,' a Clint Eastwood Film With Bradley Cooper," *New York Times*, December 24, 2014, accessed April 17, 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/25/movies/american-sniper-a-clint-eastwood-film-starring-bradley-cooper.html?referrer=google_kp&r=3.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, "Film and Popular Memory" in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 125.

film. That script, however, misses the unmitigated decoding of the invisible wounds of these wars. Simply put, *American Sniper* is still too clean and resolves too easily.

American Sniper opens in Iraq during the middle of Chris Kyle's deployment. Positioned as the sniper overwatch, Kyle assists a Marine unit patrolling the area below him. Our view, as people watching the film, is through Kyle's sniper rifle scope. While scanning, he picks up a young boy walking alongside a woman (presumably his mother). Kyle—and the viewer—witnesses the woman hand the boy a grenade. He calls up on his radio to receive confirmation of the grenade before firing, which he does not receive. If Kyle deems the boy a credible threat, he is authorized to shoot. As the boy, with the grenade in hand, begins to run, Kyle pulls the trigger. The victim of this shot, though, is a deer as the film utilizes a flashback scene with Kyle's father in rural Texas. Viewers are left on the edge of our proverbial seats.

The film returns to this combat scene twenty-five minutes later, with Kyle shooting the child and the woman who picks up the grenade after the boy's death. When Kyle is back in his barracks, he receives a word of encouragement that if he hadn't killed the boy and woman that many Marines could have died and that he was "doing his job" to which Kyle states, "Yeah, but I killed him. That is not how I imagined my first one going down." Later, Kyle recalls that memory, as:

She'd set a grenade. I didn't realize it at first. "Looks yellow," I told the chief, describing what I saw as he watched himself. She's got a grenade! Shit! Take a shot! But...I hesitated... I pushed my finger against the trigger. The bullet leapt out. I shot. The grenade dropped. I fired again as the grenade blew up... I truly, deeply hated the evil that woman possessed. I hate it to this day.²⁶

How did it come to pass that society did not talk about the implications of an ongoing war in which women and children are in the crosshairs of snipers who *need* to decide whether they live or die? Let's explore, as a discursive tactic, Hall's hypothetical readings of *American Sniper*.

²⁶ Kyle and DeFelice, *American Sniper*, 3.

First, the dominant-hegemonic reading is that Kyle is a hero, and our ongoing conflict in the Middle East is a righteous battle. Therefore, in the decoding of the dominant ideological message of *American Sniper*, it became apparent that one could not say a contrary word about the film, because—seemingly—to speak against the film (or Kyle), was to speak against military bodies. For example, when actor Seth Rogen tweeted, “*American Sniper* kind of reminds me of the movie that’s showing in the third act of *Inglorious Basterds*,”²⁷ he was referring to the mini-film within Quentin Tarantino’s (2009) *Inglorious Basterds*, entitled “Stolz der Nation,” in which German Nazi sniper and protagonist, Frederick Zoller, kills numerous Allied soldiers in an almost comically driven propaganda piece for the Nazis (utilizing the exact same binary western style of differentiating “good guys” from “bad guys”). Rogen had challenged the one repressive state apparatus that one cannot challenge: the military—and especially the service members who sacrificed.

Activist filmmaker Michael Moore also spoke out against *American Sniper* via Twitter stating, “My uncle [*sic*] killed by sniper in WW2. We were taught snipers were cowards. Will shoot u [*sic*] in the back. Snipers aren’t heroes. And invaders r [*sic*] worse.”²⁸ Individuals on social media and conservative cable news immediately retaliated on Rogen and Moore that *they* should be killed. Fiftieth Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, responded to Moore, “Michael Moore should spend a few week with ISIS and Boko Haram. Then he might appreciate *American Sniper*. I am proud of our defenders.”²⁹

²⁷ Seth Rogen, Twitter post, January 18, 2015, 11:05 a.m., <https://twitter.com/sethrogen/status/556890149674434560?lang=en>.

²⁸ Michael Moore, Twitter post, January 18, 2015, 3:40 p.m., <https://twitter.com/mmflint/status/557250871386718209>.

²⁹ Newt Gingrich, Twitter post, January 18, 2015, 5:37 p.m., <https://twitter.com/newtingrich/status/556988852897054720?lang=en>.

Second, in terms of a negotiated reading, I would argue that Rogen's actual position—not the backlash—represented a negotiated reading. In his tweet was an acceptance of the act of war, but with an inverted twist. Nothing in his tweet called the military-industrial complex into question, and his subsequent apologies confirm this. Rogen recanted his tweet, apologizing, and stating that he was not critiquing the service members, just the Tarantino film. In other words, Rogen was able to acknowledge, “the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules—it operates with exceptions.”³⁰ Rogen's negotiated reading is riddled with contradictions.

Finally, for an oppositional reading and the counterhegemony it offers in resistance, I will dislodge the media reaction, and instead focus on realities immersed in Phillip's lived experience. The goal of an oppositional and counterhegemonic reading is not to remove Kyle's service (remember the goal is more akin to LaMothe's “unconventional warrior”) but to complicate our complicit acceptance of dominant ideologies and war. The entire film of *American Sniper*, and the vignette above in particular demand a reading with the lived experience of those, like Phillip, who suffered in combat. This oppositional reading must privilege the voices of those traumatized. With Hall's oppositional reading in place, albeit tentatively, I want to propose spiritual care and counseling postures and practices that fit together with these cultural studies theoretical commitments and are upheld through Phillips remaining chapter 4 themes: belonging and a spiritual abandonment.

Part 2. A Communal-Contextual Commitment to Moral Injury Support: Communities Existing for Veterans

³⁰ Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” 136.

Utilizing Bonhoeffer and *Sanctorum Communio* (arguably Bonhoeffer's "most complex and most demanding book"³¹) is instructive in three unique ways. First, pragmatically, Bonhoeffer offers a lens with which to read liberative praxis and the liberation theologies that undergird that praxis. As one of the primary audiences for this dissertation are military chaplains, reading Bonhoeffer is more amenable to the culture of the multivalent voices within military chaplaincy, over and against a perception of Marxist ideas within liberation theologies.³²

Bonhoeffer predates Latin American liberation theologies by, at most, forty-one years if we accept that the genesis of Latin American liberation theology as the 1968 Second Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellín, Colombia, as I suggested in chapter 3, as Bonhoeffer completed *Sanctorum Communio* in 1927. This is not to say that Bonhoeffer was the originator of liberation theologies, but that his work anticipated themes and motifs that would shape these theologies. Central liberative motifs that would become paramount for liberation theologies were present throughout Bonhoeffer's work, including: God's preferential option for (and solidarity with) the marginalized, a praxis-based ecclesiology, and a God that is experienced within history—to include experiencing suffering.

In Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* Prologue, "After Ten Years," which signaled the ushering in of 1943, Bonhoeffer concludes this letter with a paragraph on "the view from below." In this, he concludes, "we have for once learnt to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the

³¹ Clifford Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1999), 20.

³² The Marxist underpinnings are arguably more pronounced within Latin American liberation theology. Cornel West has noted the perplexing nature of the relationship of "strangers" between first generation Black liberation theologies (specifically James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts) and Marxism, in "Black Theology and Marxist Thought," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume 1: 1966-1979*, ed. James Cone and Gayraud Wilmore (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 409. West offers a Marxist class and economic analysis that overlaps within Black liberation theology. The overlap includes both systems emphasizing the plight of the oppressed, their powerlessness, and the possibility of empowerment.

powerless, the oppressed, the reviled—in short, from the perspective of those who suffer.”³³ This is fundamentally a statement of liberation theology. Comparing this statement to Juan Luis Segundo, whom I closely unpacked in chapter 3, the inroads are striking. Commitment to a marginalized community, in Segundo and Bonhoeffer, is *the* first step, and theology and reflection always follow lived experience. Segundo’s hermeneutical circle comes to some semblances of truth only through practice and commitment. As Segundo noted, “the truth is truth only when it serves as the basis for truly human attitudes.”³⁴

Second, Bonhoeffer cultivates formative commitments for his life’s work within his early writings. The concept of sociality (*Sozialität*) that Bonhoeffer develops and nuances throughout *Sanctorum Communio* represents a roadmap for where Bonhoeffer not only takes his academic thought, but also how Bonhoeffer embodied his theory in his actions. Bonhoeffer scholar Clifford Green notes that without grappling with the “autobiographical dimension,” one’s understanding of Bonhoeffer’s “theological development would be darkened by inner obscurity or externally imposed speculation, or both;” and more poignantly, Bonhoeffer’s “theology was an impulse to his action.”³⁵

Elaborating on this last point, for this dissertation, Bonhoeffer’s context is more closely aligned to the experience of reintegrating moral injury than liberation theologies. In Bonhoeffer’s later work, posthumously published as *Ethics*, he wrestles with the moral injuries that were waiting for him in his dilemma whether to participate in the assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler.³⁶ Within *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer begins to discuss the moral responsibility to “act” even when those actions are morally “wrong.” He states, “the ‘world’ is thus the *domain of concrete*

³³ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 17.

³⁴ Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 32.

³⁵ Green, *Theology of Sociality*, 3, 43n55.

³⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 6, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Donald W. Stott (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

responsibility that is given to us in and through Jesus Christ.”³⁷ Importantly, for military chaplains, Bonhoeffer seemingly understands the ambiguity within moral decision-making. When split-second decisions have life-long implications, Bonhoeffer would perhaps remind veterans, “Responsible action must decide not simply between right and wrong, good and evil, but between right and right, wrong and wrong.”³⁸

The context of war, morality, and crisis enabled him to disseminate a liberative vision of God that spoke to *and from* the crisis. This is a vision of God that moral injury support needs. Phillip spoke of a God, and community, that abandoned him when he returned home. Bonhoeffer rehabilitates an understanding of Christology and anthropology that arguably speaks life-giving words of hope to returning veterans. Christ is present in each experience with the veteran. Therefore, when Phillip asks why God has abandoned him, a Bonhoefferian Christology allows a framework to shift the conversation.

Third, and finally, focusing on *Sanctorum Communio* is instructive in an attempt to rehabilitate its complexity and application within the corpus of Bonhoeffer’s oeuvre. The early theological work of Bonhoeffer, spanning from 1927-1933, is typically viewed as a period to merely get past to get to the “proper” theological texts, such as *Discipleship*, *Ethics*, or *Letters and Papers from Prison*. This hermeneutical move, in which scholars judge the early work on the notoriety of the latter work, misses a deep complexity within *Sanctorum Communio*. Theologian John Phillips, perhaps unwittingly, makes this argument as he notes that Bonhoeffer needed to “break free from his intractable ecclesiological theory” found in *Sanctorum*

³⁷ Ibid., 267. Emphasis in original.

³⁸ Ibid., 284.

Communio.³⁹ However, to call *Sanctorum Communio* merely an ecclesiological study is to miss the nuance of what Bonhoeffer is developing. In the Preface he offers this as his précis:

The more this investigation has considered the significance of the sociological category for theology, the more clearly has emerged the social intention of all the basic Christian concepts. “Person”, “primal state”, “sin”, and “revelation” can be fully comprehended only in reference to sociality.⁴⁰

Bonhoeffer’s sociality offers the nuance and setting for his ecclesiology. Essentially, it is Bonhoeffer’s Christocentric ecclesiology, the “Christ existing as church-community” (*Christus als Gemeinde existierend*), in which people learn to be in community for other people that enables me to circle back to pastoral theology and the communal-contextual paradigm as a way to holistically care for the veteran community and society at large.⁴¹

Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Theology of Sociality

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born on February 4, 1906, in Breslau, Germany (present day Poland). Dietrich was one of eight children. Dietrich’s parents, Karl and Paula, raised him and his siblings, Karl-Friedrich (born 1899), Walter (1899), Klaus (1901), Ursula (1902), Christel (1903), Sabine (Dietrich’s twin, 1906), and Susanne (1909) in a middle-class family. Dietrich’s father, Karl, was a distinguished professor of neurology and psychiatry while also serving (from 1904-1912) as director of University Hospital for Nervous Disease in Breslau until leaving for the most prestigious appointment in Germany: the University of Berlin. Various academics, scholars, teachers from numerous facilities, and other intellectuals frequented the Bonhoeffer household. Lifelong confidant and student of Bonhoeffer, Eberhard Bethge, described Dietrich’s upbringing as within, “a family that derived real education not from school, but from a deeply-

28. ³⁹ John A. Phillips, *Christ for Us in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967),

⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

rooted sense of being guardians of a great historical heritage and intellectual tradition.”⁴² This intellectual tradition would be instrumental in Dietrich’s upbringing and their collective resistance to both World Wars—especially after Walter Bonhoeffer, a soldier in the German army, died near the end of World War I, in April of 1918.

Dietrich’s decision to go into ministry and study theology was met with disappointment and some ridicule. For the Bonhoeffers, the church represented “a poor, feeble, boring, petty bourgeois institution.”⁴³ The pushback only strengthened Bonhoeffer’s resolve to reform this bourgeois institution. He would begin his formal theological education at Tübingen University in 1923. Dietrich transferred, in 1924, to the University of Berlin to focus on his studies under the country’s renowned theological professors, to include professor emeritus of church history: Adolf von Harnack. In 1927, for his dissertation, however, Bonhoeffer decided to write under the tutelage of Reinhold Seeberg. This enabled Dietrich to write a “half-historical and half-systematic work.”⁴⁴

More specifically for the data in this dissertation, Bonhoeffer worked against a prevailing Enlightenment (and German idealism) notion of the human as an autonomous individual. Bonhoeffer argued that humanity becomes human with the recognition of our responsibility to humanity. This interdependence of humanity is also central to what it means to be a Christian. There are myriad gaps in this abridged biography of Bonhoeffer’s early life, and no mention of where Bonhoeffer’s conspirator activist theology of resistance would take him once Adolf Hitler becomes German Chancellor in 1933. This is naturally a problem of scope: this is not a dissertation on Bonhoeffer, but rather a focus on his view of sociality as it is experienced in

⁴² Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Contemporary*, trans. Eric Mosbacher, Peter Ross, Betty Ross, and Frank Clarke (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1970), 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁴ Christiane Tietz, *Theologian of Resistance: The Life and Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Victoria J. Barnett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 10.

community. However, as I mentioned above, the autobiographical nature of Bonhoeffer's academic work found ways of expression in his personal life. I will offer one example before transitioning to *Sanctorum Communio*.

In 1935, Bonhoeffer took a formal role with the Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*), teaching at their Preacher's Seminary in Zingst, which later moved to Finkenwalde. The Confessing Church's goal was to train as many pastors as they could before the Nazi Gestapo ultimately shut them down at the end of 1937 (after being declared illegal in December, 1935). Bonhoeffer in these brief two years created a community, his own *sanctorum communio*. Once the Gestapo closed the seminary, Bonhoeffer rushed to compile the theology of this community, and *Life Together* (*Gemeinsames Leben*) was published. In "*Life Together* we see many ways in which Bonhoeffer's theology of sociality and his understanding of Christian community in *Sanctorum Communio* shaped the actual daily life of the college."⁴⁵ The seminary was more closely aligned to an intentional community than a traditional academic environment. The students were immersed in life together, while at the same time highlighting a rhythm of solitude as well. Daily life was filled with eating meals together, daily prayer, sermon practice, lectures, and bible study. The practice of intercessory prayer, and being available for one another in prayer, signaled a return to the theology of *Sanctorum Communio*, to which I now turn.

The Community of Saints

Throughout *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer filters the majority of theological doctrine through sociality. Sociality is the antithesis of the Enlightenment understanding of a rational individual operating autonomously from others. Bonhoeffer saw an interconnection in which,

⁴⁵ Clifford Green, "Human Sociality and Christian Community," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 125.

“the concepts of person, community, and God are inseparably and essentially interrelated.”⁴⁶

Sociality, then, is not only the interconnection of humanity, but also importantly, the interdependence of humanity. His task became one of developing a philosophy and theology that matches this inseparability. I will highlight, from Bonhoeffer’s précis, his theological anthropology and his statement on revelation—a revelation that is not dogmatic, but one that is social and *personal* as it is embodied in the programmatic “Christ existing as church-community” (*Christus als Gemeinde existierend*).

Theological Anthropology Reinforcing Belonging

Phillip was dismayed that his army unit, society, and God alienated him. This alienation was cultivated specifically in his experiences of falling through the cracks during reintegration. His army unit—recall from chapter 4—moved on and mishandled his discharge paperwork. The army values of duty, selfless service, and leadership were nonexistent. Phillip’s understanding of the camaraderie of the military disappeared, and his doubts during reintegration can be directed at Bonhoeffer, and his project in *Sanctorum Communio*. Essentially: how does Bonhoeffer’s theological anthropology foster an understanding of not only community as the collection of individuals, but what becomes of the ethical commitments of Bonhoeffer’s community?

For Bonhoeffer, the person is both an individual and a corporate entity. Bonhoeffer starts *Sanctorum Communio* unpacking his version of the I-You relationship.⁴⁷ The person in Bonhoeffer’s work is not merely an individual; the person always exists in a corporate communal setting. The person, for Bonhoeffer, is a relational construct. Humanity does not exist through

⁴⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 34.

⁴⁷ Bonhoeffer’s view is contrasted most strikingly with Martin Buber’s “I-Thou.” Buber’s classic *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner Classics, 2000) was published in 1923, four years before the publication of the dissertation version of Bonhoeffer’s *Sanctorum Communio*. Buber’s I-Thou was preferred over and against an I-It relationship. Buber’s formula is more intimately relational (overcoming an objectified “It” mentality), while Bonhoeffer’s I-You develops an ethical boundary, or limit, between I and You. Buber is not cited in Bonhoeffer’s bibliography.

individual persons but through responsibility for other persons. To expand upon humanity's responsibility for others, Bonhoeffer posits that "the individual exists only in relation to an 'other'; individual does not mean solitary. *On the contrary, for the individual to exist, 'others' must necessarily be there.*"⁴⁸ To be a human is to be in relation to others in community.

To be in relation to an other is an encounter with the divine You. "*God or the Holy Spirit joins the concrete You; only though God's active working does the other become a You to me from whom my I arises. In other words, every human You is an image of the divine you.*"⁴⁹ The divine, then, constitutes the other as a You. The divine is present in each encounter. The assertion that the divine is present in each moment is a liberative motif. This God is precisely what Phillip needed upon reintegration. When Phillip got home he: "felt abandoned by everything"; he "didn't have a connection"; and, he felt "thrown into the world over there." Phillip searched for a God that is with him in his isolation; a God that is with him in his moral injury; a God that is with him during his marital separation. God experiences the pain, suffering, and marginalization of God's people. This does not eradicate God's transcendence.

Bonhoeffer makes the same movements above with respect to humanity existing for another in an individual encounter (The I-You) with fresh social and communal responsibilities as a symbol of revelation. Bonhoeffer takes the emblematic fall of Adam and Jesus's restoration as an archetype, a *Kollektivperson*. Adam was the original "I" before the divine "You." God, through Jesus, reconciles a restored humanity before the divine "You." Bonhoeffer builds this communal argument by differentiating between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). A *Gemeinschaft* is a community, properly understood, as a place in which people structure their lives and create meaning—such as, families, a "people group," a nation, friends,

⁴⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 51. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 54-55. Emphasis in original.

and culminating in humanity overall. A *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, function at a smaller level, a “structure of purpose.”⁵⁰

Now my concern for Phillip’s reintegration is beginning to take shape. The divine’s call to support and embrace the other is what wills communities. Individuals within communities have an ethical responsibility for an *other’s* You. This ethical imperative comes from the divine:

God does not desire a history of human beings, but the history of the human *community*. However, God does not want a community that absorbs the individual into itself, but a community of *human beings*. In God’s eyes, community and individual exist in the same moment and rest in one another.⁵¹

Humanity is brought back into solidarity with God through the “vicarious action”

(*Stellvertretung*) of Jesus. I now want to spell this out even further in terms of revelation.

Social Revelation: Christ Existing as Community

It is only possible in Bonhoeffer’s sociality to say “Christ existing as community” after he articulated Jesus as *Kollektivperson*. Revelation is social (and personal), and it exists in the community. Revelation is a manifestation of divine love. Jesus as *Kollektivperson* represents God’s giving of Godself. God’s love restores humanity “by revealing God’s own love in Christ, by no longer approaching us in demand and summons, purely as You, but instead by *giving God’s own self as an I, opening God’s own heart*.”⁵² The vicarious action—*Stellvertretung*—is humanity’s call to exist and love one another. Bonhoeffer describes this as “*Church-community and church members being structurally ‘with-each-other’ [Miteinander] as appointed by God and the members’ active ‘being-for-each-other’ [Füreinander] and the principle of vicarious representative action [Stellvertretung]*.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., 88.

⁵¹ Ibid., 80.

⁵² Ibid., 145. Emphasis in original.

⁵³ Ibid., 178. Emphasis in original.

Bonhoeffer offers a response to Phillip's alienation and longing for belonging. With Bonhoeffer's understanding of God's presence *in* the community, and our ethical responsibility to those within our community, Phillip could potentially have an ongoing community that he experienced in the army—prior to reintegration. As a chaplain, and one who journeys with service members for short passages of time, I would want Phillip—and other veterans—to know that these communities are still not idyllic, and people will forget his story; however, the vision is for a community that can bear the stories of our veterans upon return. Now, *how* communities are to support and live out this vicarious representation falls outside of Bonhoeffer, and I turn to the communal-contextual paradigm of spiritual care and counseling for insights.

Communal-Contextual Application

Moving away from Bonhoeffer, but maintaining his communal focus, what role does spiritual care and counseling have in advocating for Phillip within a liberative praxis in which communal solidarity is privileged? Phillip would sit, alone, in his basement with his military memorabilia and remember the people with whom he served. He can still recall the first chapel service he attended at Fort Jackson during basic training. The pews were filled—shoulder to sweaty shoulder—with soldiers who wanted to go to church. Phillip laughs recounting that it was either church or get assigned extra duty. “Who wouldn’t go to church?” Slowly, though, a community emerged. These soldiers were going through similar training exercises as Phillip; these soldiers were at a similar stage in the basic training schedule.

After that initial Sunday service, he was out in the field at Victory Tower, a tower utilized to not only develop the skills of rappelling, but more importantly, learning confidence to overcome fears. Phillip was scared. When it was his turn, he peered over the ledge at the seemingly unconceivable height. While situating his feet in a more balanced posture he kicked

some loose dirt off the platform and watched it fall. The fall seemed to take forever. Phillip froze. With a similar heart pounding that would return in Afghanistan, Phillip wanted to quit. “I hate heights!” A soldier, from a different platoon, was already on the ground and looked up and saw his battle buddy, Phillip, struggling: “Come on, man! You got this! We are right here.” He began to clap for Phillip. Phillip wiped the sweat that was pooling from under the brim of his helmet, and clumsily repelled down the wall. When he reached the bottom, the soldier erupted with applause. During chapel, the next week, the soldier addressed this to the group: “you all should have seen Phillip! He was so brave, man!” Phillip holds onto that memory because it was only through the encouragement of a “Christian battle buddy” that he was able to get off the obstacle. As inconsequential as that memory may seem to others, in the grand scheme of Phillip’s experiences, it operates perfectly in how Phillip envisions community: people supporting one another to achieve goals that he or she could not complete individually.

Within spiritual care and counseling, the communal-contextual paradigm, just as its name indicates, seeks to reestablish connections to religious communities, both as a source of providing care and as a place of truly building community around one another. The community is a manifestation of God’s memory for all people. God is in relationship with human beings by “hearing us, remembering us, and bringing us into relationship with one another.”⁵⁴ Also implicit in its name, this paradigm is focused on taking contexts seriously as a site for interpretation, and as this dissertation has prioritized thus far, this is in keeping with case study methodology and a liberative practical theology.

The paradigm’s concepts are built upon the theological reflection that God remembers God’s people. John Patton unpacks how this understanding of God and God’s mission influences

⁵⁴ John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 6.

how communities of faith provide care. Phillip's experience in Afghanistan would agree with Patton, while also adding nuance. Phillip *felt* "remembered" in Afghanistan. While waiting on EOD to clear a suspected IED, stranded, in the middle of an exposed valley, Phillip recalls a peace that could only mean God was with him. At home, during reintegration, Phillip did not *feel* anything. How can communities of faith provide care when God is nowhere to be found?

Phillip has experienced the answer, though. He noted that when he scaled Victory Tower, God was with him in the cheers of his battle buddy. In Bonhoeffer's work this is Christ existing as community. In Bonhoeffer's understanding, humanity does not exist through individual persons but through responsibility for other persons. To be a human is to be in relation to others in community.

From Phillip's experience, and his situational analysis, the communal-contextual paradigm is beneficial. In the communal-contextual paradigm there is an emphasis on involving a community both in providing care "officially" and on including the community in the healing (or what Patton refers to as "re-membering"⁵⁵) process. Remember, for moral injury, any intervention that only focuses on pathologizing and does not include a *community* element for reintegration is destined to come up short. Moral injury is context dependent. This is vital for military chaplains to recognize. There is, of course, an essential place for individual therapy and pastoral counseling in moral injury treatment; however, if we are to broaden our understanding of moral injury away from isolated combat phenomena and to reconceptualize it within community *and ideological* values, then I think this paradigm and its functions of care provide greater opportunities for lasting healing and the implementation of practices of support.

To analyze these systems, feminist pastoral theology is properly situated to critique and formulate new epistemologies for care. Feminist methods afford me a critical consciousness to

⁵⁵ Ibid., 39-61.

examine the intersections of power and oppression as they influence Phillip and other veterans. Therefore, I would like to give some attention to feminist concerns as they assist in sharpening Phillip's questions. This will also prove beneficial as it exemplifies the concerns of the communal-contextual paradigm. Stated clearly, as Kathleen Greider, Gloria Johnson, and Kristen Leslie note in their exhaustive look at feminist writings within pastoral theology, feminist writings have "contributed precisely and significantly to the emergence of this communal-contextual paradigm."⁵⁶

Feminist and womanist pastoral theologians have pointed out that the epistemologies of women have not been taken seriously in theological discourse. The reverse has consistently been true: the experiences of white men have been upheld as normative and as the ideal. Carroll Watkins Ali has helpfully deconstructed the influence of Seward Hiltner on pastoral theology. Throughout her text *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context*, she convincingly argues that Hiltner's method is not sufficient for poor African American women and the communities they represent.⁵⁷ Hiltner's functions of care (healing, sustaining, and guiding) do not accurately speak to the communal struggles of African American communities. To speak individualistically in counseling without focusing on what impacts the entire community will not lead to long-term healing. It may present temporary solutions, but not the lasting liberation that Watkins Ali seeks. To embody Watkins Ali's method, the caregiver must acknowledge, "There also needs to be ongoing provisions for persons whose critical needs are extended over a long duration."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Kathleen Greider, Gloria Johnson, and Kristen Leslie, "Three Decades of Women Writing for our Lives," in *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austern (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 22.

⁵⁷ Carroll A. Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Watkins Ali adds three community-based functions to Hiltner's functions: "nurturing" (which Howard Clinebell also addressed), "empowering," and "liberating."⁵⁹ To nurture the community, one must have an ongoing commitment to provide care that empowers counselees to have the strength to face various struggles within their community. The function of empowering contains the insistence that the struggle for liberation and emancipation must come from the oppressed people themselves. Within veteran support, then, an empowerment would include not only that communities listen to the narratives of veterans, but also that those communities relinquish and redistribute resources to these veteran voices.

To explicate on one small example: sermons on veteran support cannot be relegated to two Sundays a year: Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Empowerment from the veteran community would also include deciding where—and how—to use resources, spend time, and causes the community undertakes. Watkins Ali provides this empowerment in community so the members of the community can resist the systems that oppress. Finally, the liberating function entails praxis. It involves working together as a community to eliminate oppression. The significance of Watkins Ali's work is her insistence that, to adequately care for a community of people, the caregiver must address the systemic forces of oppression that keep the community down.

It is evident from chapter 4 how Watkins Ali offers inroads for addressing Phillip's experience. Phillip *had* communal support in Afghanistan, and it is primarily the *lack of* a community during his reintegration that has exacerbated his moral injury. Phillip would benefit from a nurturing presence to affirm his concerns, while also working in a liberative manner to connect him to other veterans and community members who are aware of the realities of the complications of reintegration. There is one remaining feminist concern that operates as a pivot

⁵⁹ Ibid., 121. This is done to create a more robust version of care, not eradicate Hiltner's work.

for this section and names a piece of Phillip's experience that pervades all others and further complicates dominant ideologies: neoliberal reason systematically oppresses people and leads to suffering.

Veterans as Neoliberal Subjects

Before transitioning to chapter 6, I want to address an additional theme that emerged in my time with Phillip: the "*hegemonic project*" of neoliberal ideology.⁶⁰ Through addressing neoliberal reason, I will also expand and deepen a critique in how it functions within veteran reintegration of moral injury. This critique is instructive as it not only speaks to Phillip's experience, but it also forms a bridge from spiritual care and counseling to cultural studies. Through Phillip's exchanges with civilians, his army unit, and even God, he functions within neoliberal reason as a neoliberal subject: what matters is no longer what Phillip as an individual offers society; rather, as a neoliberal subject, Phillip is worth what he can produce through the capital that is his very existence. Phillip was anxious to go back to work; he did not know what a normal job would feel like anymore. During Phillip's first day back he met with his immediate supervisor. He was surprised—caught off guard even—by his supervisor's attitude. His supervisor welcomed him back by lamenting:

My boss loses staffing when you guys leave the country. They don't have their people. Soldiers are always gone. It is either Drill, or some schooling, or another deployment... You volunteer for this, and you volunteer for that... My boss is tired of hiring vets. Phillip, just because you're a vet doesn't mean you are a good worker! I have had to fire many of you straight up lazy dudes.

Phillip was dumbfounded, and just nodded his head in agreement. It was during this same season of coming back to work that he shared this comment from chapter 4:

I work with a guy who is a disabled vet and another co-worker said, "so, I don't care. Why should I care? You all volunteered for it!"

⁶⁰ Hall, "The Neoliberal Revolution," 334. Emphasis in original.

The internal logic to a dominant ideology of “support the troops” (and its liturgical “thank you for your service”) is that one way in which society extends its appreciation is by ensuring that the job the veteran put on hold in order to deploy, will be waiting once he or she returns. This logic, however, is not always this simple, and often conflicts with other dominant ideologies. Within the Reserve component, especially, when individuals step away from jobs to deploy, they expect a job when they return. There are, of course, legal mandates to protect veterans at their previous pay scale and job responsibilities, but what I am more interested in is a) how neoliberal reason creates subjects (both as employee and as employer) that value competition and productivity over solidarity even after putting their life on the line in combat, and b) how this neoliberal reason functions ideologically. Now, though, to make this neoliberal as subject argument, I need to briefly define neoliberalism, and more importantly for my argument, neoliberal reason.

Neoliberalism posits that deregulated markets are the key to personal freedom. Neoliberal theorists insist that governments not intervene in the market. Without intervention, capital is freely able to move across borders. With this in mind, neoliberal ideology wants to limit, or end entirely, state-sponsored social welfare programs. Neoliberalism’s ideal is based upon the (erroneous) metaphor that a “rising tide lifts all boats.” The implication being that if the government stays out of the market and enables commonsense and deregulated trade to continue, then the “trickle down” economics of President Ronald Reagan (aka “Reaganomics”) will benefit the entire population. The question that remains, however, deals with those who have been systematically oppressed and prohibited from purchasing a boat, so to speak. The systematic critique reveals the underside of neoliberalism, and that this underside favors—and advocates for—competition, inequality over equality. Pastoral theologian Cedric Johnson asserts that

neoliberalism “created space for an *acceptance of inequality* as an essential component of economic growth and social progress.”⁶¹

What took place in Reaganomics is precisely what is programmed in neoliberalism: wealth is redistributed unevenly and benefits the minority who are already wealthy. The oppressed are further marginalized, with the gap between the wealthy and marginalized burgeoning. These groups are split on class lines. Pastoral theologian Bruce Rogers-Vaughn argues convincingly that class inequality is an additional element within the matrix of the neoliberal turn; inequality is a “form of oppression intrinsic to capitalism, in which dominate elites use their economic, political, and cultural power to subjugate and stigmatize people who do not possess such power.”⁶² Phillip’s lived experience lends credence to Rogers-Vaughn’s insight. Phillip found himself as one of the many working poor in this country. This, as detailed in chapter 4, was a reason for enlisting: financial stability to purchase a home.

Without a college education, Phillip struggled to find steady work in which he was not underemployed, and this continued after the deployment as well. Phillip is “his own capital, his own producer, the sources of his earnings.”⁶³ He is reduced to neoliberal reason. Neoliberal reason puts forth that it is the economic realm, rather than a social or political, that determines existence. Critically, then, it becomes those realms of life that have *nothing* to do with economics that are subjected to an economized enterprise. As political theorist Wendy Brown offers, “the point is that neoliberal rationality disseminates the *mode of the market* to all domains and

⁶¹ Cedric C. Johnson, *Race, Religion, and Resilience in the Neoliberal Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 37. Emphasis in original.

⁶² Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, “Class Power and Human Suffering: Resisting the Idolatry of the Market in Pastoral Theology and Care,” in *Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care: Critical Trajectories in Theory and Practice*, ed. Nancy J. Ramsay (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 55.

⁶³ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2010), 225-226.

activities—even where money is not at issue—and configures human beings exclusively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as *homo oeconomicus*.”⁶⁴

At this point, multiple pastoral and practical theologians, such as Rogers-Vaughn, Johnson, Poling, LaMothe, Philip Helsel, Stephen Pattison, Archie Smith, and Joyce Ann Mercer have offered liberative practices that could rectify or at least operate as resistance, to Phillip succumbing to neoliberal reason.⁶⁵ Undergirding their concerns is the critique that when everything is economized as capital, “the foundation vanishes for citizenship concerned with public things and the common good.”⁶⁶ Employers, who are driven through competition to increase profits and productivity, have little room for military service in a Reserve component context. It is far easier to “support the troops” when those troops are on active duty and not a threat to one’s financial bottom line. Therefore, there is a conflict between dominant ideologies: one of supporting the troops and one of rampant capitalism. Of the names mentioned, I want to focus on Rogers-Vaughn as a clinical collaborator on the impacts of neoliberal reason.

In the midst of oppression caused by neoliberal reason, Rogers-Vaughn enacts practices to revitalize theology as an asset for care. In chapter 6, I offer counterhegemonic spiritual care and counseling practices, but at this juncture, Rogers-Vaughn provides a prescient critique for caregivers. The care provided can be one in which neoliberal reason is “promoted,”

⁶⁴ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), 31. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁵ Rogers-Vaughn notes that the locatedness is an impactful aspect of Johnson’s work. Johnson is able to “explore the impact of neoliberalism on African Americans,” *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 23. This is an important difference between Johnson and Rogers-Vaughn’s monographs. Rogers-Vaughn methodically traces neoliberalism’s development from a broader perspective and focus on the “global community” in *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age*. Johnson, on the other hand, reverses Rogers-Vaughn’s move: Johnson takes a similarly methodical analysis and explores the material effects of neoliberal on a specific African American community in New York City. Helsel is interested in power as the manifestation of class struggle. LaMothe’s work focuses on how neoliberalism neglects care practices. Stephen Pattison helpfully, and successfully, integrates specifically Latin American liberation theologies with pastoral care functions in a British psychiatric hospital setting. Mercer mentions the absence of class in an analysis of oppression, but merely addresses the absence and does not offer substantive additions or enact practices.

⁶⁶ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 39.

“accommodated,” or “resisted.”⁶⁷ There are similarities between these three positions and Hall’s three hypothetical ideological decoding of texts. Those care practices that *promote* neoliberal reason are those that maintain an individual pathologizing. The caregiver “urges us to look for the origins of suffering only within our selves.”⁶⁸ Phillip’s supervisor’s comment above that reserve service members “volunteer for it,” is a statement of neoliberal promotion. There is no liminal space in reintegration in which a veteran can rest—the market does not rest, and neither should you. This is the dominant-hegemonic reading of neoliberalism

Rogers-Vaughn argues that those who *accommodate* neoliberal reason attempt to put a reformed face on neoliberalism. These accommodating practices come up to the precipice of actual resistance and critique of the system, and similar to Hall’s negotiated readings, back away at the crucial juncture. At this juncture, “the usual outcome, however, is that sufferers receive just enough help to remain conformed to a system that produced the pain to begin with.”⁶⁹ An accommodated posture toward neoliberalism is precisely where the majority of moral injury interventions reside. The interventions are framed within the current ideological framework, and those frameworks are not challenged. They simply exist. Structural and systemic change does not happen within accommodation.

The goal is to confront the neoliberal and ideological systems and *resist* (Hall’s oppositional reading). The systemic suffering that is imparted on one individual remains true for the community as well. This is the case because suffering (and inequality) is built *into* the system. The community is in this together, and this is precisely the solidarity that this section and the

⁶⁷ Rogers-Vaughn, “Class Power and Human Suffering,” 71.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

dissertation overall advocate. Rogers-Vaughn adds, “individuals no longer suffer in isolation, nor are they alone responsible for ‘getting better...’ The solidarity it nurtures is caring in itself.”⁷⁰

Implications for Practical Theology and This Project

This chapter revealed and critiqued *how* society is mired within ideology and how ideology impacts returning veterans, like Phillip, experiencing moral injury. The strategic advantage of utilizing Hall’s work is that opposition is possible. Practices of opposition can be enacted. Those practices are the goal of chapter 6 as it will highlight the fourth task in Osmer’s practical theology: the pragmatic. This task forms and enacts “strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable.”⁷¹ Osmer fundamentally understands the pragmatic as a leadership role. Leadership is *a* role of a Gramscian intellectual, which I argue is *a* role for military chaplains. Intellectuals are essential in privileging spaces in which new intellectual, ideological, and creative resources are disseminated. Remember, from chapter 2’s genealogy on ideology, in Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony there is never a universal political foundation, and intellectuals are instrumental in forming counterhegemonic communities which ultimately “permeate society with new systems of value, belief, and morality.”⁷² A counterhegemonic community sees veterans differently; a counterhegemonic community listens intently; a counterhegemonic community supports the lived experience of veterans. Therefore, it is now time to privilege counterhegemonic moral injury support groups, as up until now, these practices of opposition have not been offered.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁷¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 176.

⁷² Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 21.

Chapter 6

Oppositional Forces: Toward a Counterhegemonic Paradigm for Spiritual Care and Counseling

Both the listener and the speaker have emotional “skin in the game” with one another. If it is true that “I am as we are,” then the difference between the caregiver and careseeker is relatively differentiated by roles and context, but not by our humanity and our capacity for “mutual speaking and listening.”¹

— Larry Graham

While cultural politics and ideological struggle are not sufficient in themselves to restructure the social formation, there can be no sustained established counterhegemonies without their articulation in culture and ideology... The domain of culture and ideology is where those new positions are opened and where the new articulations have to be made. And in that domain, people can change and struggle.²

— Stuart Hall

The goal of this final chapter is to propose an interdisciplinary practical theology that is constructive, critical, and offers transferable proposals for veteran support for military chaplains and spiritual care providers. In light of Phillip’s moral injury and experience of reintegration—highlighted and analyzed in chapter 4—and the communal-contextual commitments established in chapter 5, I now want to discuss how reintegration could function differently in the midst of American dominant ideologies. In recognition of the demonstrated power of how dominant ideologies can amplify existing moral injuries, one in which reintegration is further complicated by a cultural ecosystem steeped in ideology, the framework that I am developing is a modified spiritual care and counseling paradigm based within Lartey’s “social action,” in which the tasks

¹ Graham, *Moral Injury*, 101.

² Stuart Hall, “Culture, Resistance, and Struggle,” in *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 189-190.

of resistance, opposition, and solidarity function to “speak truth to power.”³ Each of these functions is communal; reintegration is a communal activity for both the veteran and the civilian community.

The framework I propose is an interdisciplinary practical theology: first, from British cultural studies, the entire framework is understood within the struggle of counterhegemony offered by Hall, building upon Gramsci. Within that framework, military chaplains are positioned to provide effective leadership against an exacerbation of moral injury through dominant ideologies. The positioning of military chaplains is as Gramscian “intellectuals,” originally outlined in chapter 2. Upholding that framework, from Christian theology, is a God that is co-suffering with the veteran. I develop a liturgy of moral injury support that emphasizes that co-suffering God. Finally, building upon that liturgy, the actual spiritual care practices and means of solidarity are provided via narrative therapy. Using narrative therapy allows for a privileging of the veteran’s stories and overcomes the binary typology of hero and head case. With that, I return to Hall, and his development of Gramsci.

My framework overall is understood within the theoretical work of Hall and his appropriation of Gramsci’s political theory. Hall proposed hypothetical interpretive positions for decoding ideology. Practically, this means that the work of reintegration and the specific praxiological commitments are context dependent. Resistance to dominant ideologies is possible. I am, therefore, utilizing Hall’s oppositional readings with the potential of forming a counterhegemonic community from a Gramscian perspective. Appropriating Gramsci, in particular, is necessary as he offers active, concrete, and tangible steps toward change. Gramsci, then, is beneficial in developing a framework capable of combining the complexities of moral

³ Lartey, *In Living Color*, 57-58.

injury reintegration, the matrices of dominant ideologies that exacerbate reintegration, and the role of military chaplains to provide support.

In my own appropriation of Gramsci, I am not “simplistically believing Gramsci has the answers or holds the key to different historical and contemporary problems,” but claiming that there is an “importance of thinking in a Gramscian way.”⁴ What this dissertation is attempting to critique are dominant ideologies concerning American military service and how these ideologies function to exacerbate an existing moral injury. A dominant ideological narrative of American military service, as Moon reminds us, “honors military service on a superficial level and cannot easily accommodate evidence of PTSD, moral injury, and veteran suicide because these phenomena seem to diminish the stoic warrior image.”⁵

A dominant ideology and mythology of the US military (and service members) is the belief in a quasi-holy cause: if the United States is involved in a conflict, there is an inherent threat to US security. The logic suggests it is better to fight “them” over “there” lest “they” bring the conflict to the US. The service members are the ways in which security is maintained. As conduits of our national security, they remain removed from critique, and deserve our platitudes and valorization. Dominant ideologies are produced, as I have shown in numerous places, in our reverence to the service member via the United States flag during the national anthem at sporting events, our liturgical mantra of “thank you for your service” disconnected from actual appreciation, and within mass media texts (promulgated in particular within *American Sniper*). The veteran is the centerpiece of this dominant ideology.

Dominant ideologies mold the cultural consciousness of veterans and civilians alike. What is needed, and what I have been building toward, is an oppositional resistance that pushes

⁴ Adam David Morton, *Unraveling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy* (New York: Pluto Press, 2007), 35.

⁵ Moon, “(Re)Turning Warriors,” 86.

back against ideological domination. Phillip, like many veterans, needs communities that function counterhegemonically: Change is possible.

I ended chapter 5 noting that within an oppositional reading and the counterhegemony it offers in resistance, it becomes necessary to dislodge the media reaction, and instead focus on realities immersed in Phillip's lived experience. To elaborate, above it has been critical and necessary to focus on *theoretically* what is taking place in dominant ideology's production and how dominant-hegemonic readings are produced within professional ideology. Practical theology is able to speak back into Hall's work and expand upon his oppositional readings through the inclusion of spiritual practices that cultivate lives *of* opposition. An oppositional reading seeks to retotalize reintegration through addressing the lived experience and context of the veterans and civilians involved in the counterhegemonic community. My own practical theological interpretation of Hall's oppositional reading position is strengthened through Hall's Gramscianism. I will argue that military chaplains, primarily, provide solidarity, as religious leaders and Gramscian intellectuals. However, before making an argument about the *posture* of military chaplains, I need to "think" from a Gramscian perspective how a counterhegemonic force strategically helps veterans reintegrate.

The Chaplain as Intellectual

In the previous chapter's examination of Stuart Hall I discussed his critique of Althusser that you cannot formulate *a single* ideology for an entire class. Media texts are produced—not given—within dominant ideologies, and I noted Hall's positioning concerning opportunities for "oppositional" readings of texts. An oppositional position "detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of

reference.”⁶ Veteran support is in desperate need of both a retotalized understanding of reintegration and also an alternative framework for reintegration. Throughout this chapter, the role of the chaplain is fundamental to the paradigm. This is partly because of the chaplain corps’ place within the military culture, the aforementioned ministry of presence, and therefore since chaplains are within that culture—even on the periphery—there is still a unique opportunity to journey with veterans coming to terms with MIEs. Before discussing a proposed liturgy and mechanisms of solidarity, I want to return to Hall and Gramsci as a means of solidifying the role of chaplains.

A “War of Position”: Gramsci’s Counterhegemony

Oppositional readings are the conduit within which a Gramscian counterhegemonic “cell” can take shape.⁷ Within Gramsci’s seventh prison notebook, dated between 1930-1931, a counterhegemonic group can take power via the continuum of political struggle between a “war of maneuver” and a “war of position.”⁸ This continuum was how he conceptualized the differences in revolution between Western Europe and Russia. In Russia, a “war of maneuver” entailed the physical movement of a working class element, small in number, to take power back. A small group, split on class lines, could overwhelm the state because the level of civil support offered no resistance. Critically, then, Gramsci’s point is that a state’s hegemony is stabilized through its power of coercion within civil society *and* by its use of force (the Machiavellian centaur mentioned in chapter 2). Direct action fails when the state’s credibility is firmly ensconced in civil society. By contrast, in Western Europe, civil society represents a robust interplay of hegemony.

⁶ Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” 138.

⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 223.

⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, vol. III (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 168.

Therefore, that same small faction that ignited revolution in Russia would not work within the Western European model due to the established civil society apparatuses in which intellectuals, the “organizers of ideology,” spread common sense values and norms to the masses.⁹ Gramsci elaborates, “in Russia, the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed.”¹⁰ A war of maneuver, then, would ultimately fail in Western Europe. By contrast, a war of position is the strategic means of resisting domination.

Gramsci’s war of position is the activation and building of a counterhegemonic force. To build this cell, Gramsci noted the necessity of leadership and intellectual resources not found within the hegemonic institutions. This point is elaborated in a lengthy—yet critical—section of the *Quaderni*:

A human mass does not “distinguish” itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-praxis nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of “specialized” in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas. But the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings...

The process of development is tied to a dialectic between the intellectuals and the masses. . . But every leap forward towards a new breadth and complexity of the intellectual stratum is tied to an analogous movement on the part of the “simple.”¹¹

Hegemony is spread and further established in a society through the success of intellectuals and their implementation of consent. Victory is the “seizing of the balance of power . . . commanding

⁹ Roland Boer, *Criticism of Heaven: On Marxism and Theology*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 270.

¹⁰ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, III, 169.

¹¹ Gramsci, *Selections*, 334.

the balance of political, social, and ideological forces at each point in the social formation.”¹²

Intellectuals are arguably the second most important theme (or *leitmotif*) in Gramsci’s *Quaderni*, behind hegemony, and were drafted in his journals mere months following his arrest.¹³

For Gramsci, an organic intellectual is responsible for organizing and leading from within his or her class structure. By “organic,” Gramsci has in mind, “a revolutionary urgency, the look forward to winning the struggle for hegemony.”¹⁴ Organic intellectuals ensure that new ideas filter to the masses. These ideas are not forced upon people in a hierarchical, top-down fashion as propaganda; rather, they seep into everyday life as values, language, and culture. Organic intellectuals represent the aspirations of their own class, and although this dissertation is not solely fixated on class, military chaplains have class interests and alliances because they represent the soldiers in the unit and are bonded to veteran communities via the solidarity of shared experiences. With that background, a more thorough analysis of organic intellectuals is warranted, and specifically how military chaplains can function as Gramscian intellectuals.

Military Chaplains as Gramscian Intellectuals

Military chaplains can function as Gramscian intellectuals, and critically for this dissertation, military chaplains *as religious leaders* and intellectuals can stand in as a political “party.” Gramsci elaborates this as, “it turns out that on special occasions the clergy of all the churches has functioned as public opinion in the absence of a normal party and a press organ of such a party.”¹⁵ *Prison Notebooks* editor and Gramsci scholar, Joseph Buttigieg offers some clarity on how clergy functioned in this way. Gramsci was particularly struck by an active clergy

¹² Stuart Hall, “Domination and Hegemony,” in *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 178.

¹³ Kate Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 18.

¹⁴ Boer, *Criticism of Heaven*, 238.

¹⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 163.

role in political strikes, campaigning for an eight-hour workday in the 1910s and 1920s, and allowing parishioners to use church property for strikes. Gramsci noted individual ministers partaking in these strikes, but also the ecumenical commitments of the Industrial Committee of the Protestant Churches, the Federal Council of Churches, and the Interchurch World Movement.¹⁶

Now, clearly, this dissertation is not advocating the advancement of a new political party. Within the *Quaderni*, “party” refers to a traditional political party, and to a “wide range of organizations that bring those with common interests together.”¹⁷ To make this point even more clearly, Hall describes the importance of parties in Gramsci: “no ideology or theory is worth its salt until it has found a party, that is to say, an organizational-institutional expression.”¹⁸ Therefore, with Gramsci’s insights, it is clearer how chaplains can function in an intellectual role supporting counterhegemonic groups—or cells—and ultimately empowering the veterans toward their own advancement.

The churches, then, represented, in lieu of a political party, as a cell that single-mindedly represented the interests of that cell. Within that paradigm, clergy standing in for political interests of a cell, Gramsci begins to sketch what becomes an organic intellectual. Clergy are somewhat of a proto-organic intellectual. The role of clergy is an essential component not only to how Gramsci understands intellectuals, but also how he methodologically conceptualizes the alliance of intellectuals and the working class within an implementation of communism. This ultimately becomes a historical search of clerical functions for Gramsci.

¹⁶ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, I, 454. Buttigieg also notes that Gramsci had André Philip’s 1927 text *Le Problème ouvrier aux États-Unis* with him in prison. This text detailed the role of the clergy in the social movements mentioned above.

¹⁷ Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense*, 33.

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, “The Formation of Cultural Studies,” 11-12.

Beginning in the Middle Ages, Gramsci introduces the “class” role of the clergy. He notes that a study of the class role of the clergy:

It seems to me that it would be indispensable as a beginning and as a condition for the whole study that remains to be done on the function of religion in the historical and intellectual development of humanity. The precise juridical and de facto situation of the Church and the clergy in various periods and countries, its economic conditions and functions, its exact relations with the ruling classes and with the state.¹⁹

Gramsci’s insights are important to my overall investigation: how can a military chaplain, within a hegemonic institution of the military-industrial complex, still maintain the interests of their service members? In another place in the *Quaderni* Gramsci notes that even within hegemonic institutions some factions and cells can work against hegemonic tendencies. Gramsci notes that “modernists, integralists, and Jesuits” are the cells within the Roman Catholic Church fighting against its hegemony. Those groups are “‘parties’ inside the ‘international absolute empire.’”²⁰

I want to return to the Middle Ages, as Gramsci notes that the clergy operated as their own class, yet still operate with a dialectical tension in regard to the interests of feudal parishioners. On the one hand, clergy positioned themselves in alliance with the peasants “against the other classes, insofar as the peasants enabled the Roman Catholic Church to maintain and expand its influence.”²¹ There is, therefore, a religious and moral commitment to the lower classes and the clergy’s own economic interests. Gramsci highlights how the Roman Catholic Church exploited the their parishioners. On the other hand, clergy still aligned themselves with the noble class; therefore, continuing to support their own economic interests. This commitment to both sides continues into the French Revolution. Gramsci notes that during

¹⁹ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, I, 234.

²⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Derek Boothman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) 98.

²¹ Boer, *Criticism of Heaven*, 247.

this period, the clergy's corruption fractured itself as a class and also fractured clergy from their parishioners.

Moving into capitalism, Gramsci starts to refer to clergy as a "caste." Clergy—and the church—have lost their cultural hegemony and prominence.²² Clergy sought to maintain relevance through education. The Roman Catholic Church begins to teach—Gramsci is most mesmerized by the University of the Sacred Heart (University of Sacro Cuore)—activities to become "the mechanism for selecting the most intelligent and capable individuals from the lower classes to be admitted into the ruling class."²³ The mechanisms are not merely reproducing clergy; on the contrary, these mechanisms work to place lay individuals into key leadership roles in society. These lay individuals are "more valuable auxiliaries of the Church as university professors rather than as cardinals, etc."²⁴

Ultimately, Gramsci's interest in the clergy is as a paradigm and fermenting link between the working class and the intellectual in his time. He is interested in how the clergy align themselves, via class, with their parishioners. Gramsci was searching for:

...The role of the organic intellectual: the detachment or lack of class fit of this "caste" of intellectuals; the single-mindedness of the educational program of the Church, of which the university functions as the missing piece; the "democracy" of the Church; its distinct politics and the ability to have a direct impact on contemporary politics; and, finally, the whole notion of the "Catholic cell."²⁵

This quote pivots away from Gramsci's historical analysis, and more decisively returns to my focus on the role of the military chaplain *as an intellectual* within the military ecosystem.

Military chaplains are educated professionals. Through attaining a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, military chaplains represent some of the more educated professionals in the

²² This period also harkens back to the Western university model that Chapter 2 covered.

²³ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, II, 222.

²⁴ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, II, 224.

²⁵ Boer, *Criticism of Heaven*, 255.

military—even if their graduate education is theologically based, or as Gramsci describes, “intellectually subaltern.”²⁶ That education affords military chaplains a commissioning status as officers in the military. In a rank-based ecosystem of power, chaplains occupy a space of privilege that comes from rank, including direct access to the commanding officer. How then should chaplains use power and privilege? Pastoral theologian Stephen Pattison also appropriates Gramsci in noting that the role those with power and privilege should undertake is that of an organic intellectual.²⁷ Pattison is correct that chaplains must make a conscious decision about how one uses the power and privilege afforded to them by the system. Further, Pattison is also correct to connect the clergy’s role to Gramsci’s critique that the clergy can use their influence to effect change on either side.²⁸

Gramsci’s intellectuals are a necessary component of the struggle toward power, and this could potentially present a conflict for military chaplains. For example, chaplains, as officers, are compensated at a higher rate than lower-rank enlisted soldiers. This reality does not remove the necessity to remain in solidarity and aligned with their soldiers. Gramsci notes that this potential conflict is not reserved for modern-day clergy. Clergy have always had the potential to function in a liminal space, on the one hand, representing their own economic interests while, on the other hand, also supporting the religious interests of their parishioners.

Returning to the experience of moral injury and the role of military chaplains, class does not restrict the experience of moral injury. Chaplains, and high-ranking officers, are impacted and traumatized just as often as lower-ranked enlisted soldiers—which can further solidify a chaplain’s link to the lived experience of the soldiers reintegrating moral injury. Military chaplains, as uniformed members of military service, are immersed within military life and

²⁶ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, II, 223.

²⁷ Stephen Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), 227.

²⁸ Ibid.

military culture. Military chaplains serve in space and time with the individuals struggling to reintegrate, and this is an asset for providing care. It is further the precarious nature of the military chaplain within the military that affords them the ability to strive for new possibilities. These are precisely Gramscian concerns; namely, the chaplain is linked to the concerns of the service members. Political theorist, theologian, and Marxist Roland Boer states:

Gramsci is intrigued as to how one's own "caste" may operate at some remove from the current structures, always with an eye on a very different future. Thus, precisely through being a relic, the clergy provide a glimpse of something different, able to look forward in a way that does not merely replicate the present. It is their backwardness, the fact that they are not in touch that enables them to anticipate a different future. That is to say, they act according to an agenda that is, in many respects, their own and not "of this world."²⁹

Boer is noting that it is the precarious liminality of chaplains that enables them to strive toward healing. Pattison offers his own liberative *leitmotif* to this liminality, *locus theologicus*, as a reminder that spiritual care and counseling is done from a location embedded in a community.³⁰ Pattison helpfully articulates a spiritual care and counseling *posture*; namely, one that is generated from located solidarity. Womanist theologian Carroll Watkins Ali argues similarly that power and privilege must be attached to a conscious solidarity or an "attitude of advocacy" for the "least of these who are struggling with survival and liberation issues."³¹ Chaplains are responsible to provide support to service members assigned to them, and I will expand this to note that even during the reintegration season when veterans have completed a deployment, these individuals are still within a chaplain's *locus theologicus*. Chaplains understand the plight of these veterans and are therefore situated to provide clinically competent support. For example, although I did not deploy with Phillip, we have solidarity. I find resonance

²⁹ Boer, *Criticism of Heaven*, 258.

³⁰ Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*, 48.

³¹ Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 120.

in that I am transformed through his experiences—as they intersect with my own—and work to provide solidarity with him in these contexts. I want him to flourish now that he is home.

To conclude this section on Gramsci and intellectuals, it is clearer now that military chaplains can function in an intellectual role. In the post-9/11 landscape, military chaplains are understood as “force multipliers.” This role functions to elevate a chaplain’s place within military tactics—essentially, how can a chaplain get service members back “in the fight” more effectively? Force multiplier is a divergence from a traditional role of merely providing religious support to assigned service members. Within the function of offering religious support, a chaplain could provide the religious rites and services he or she is authorized to perform as an ordained or credentialed religious leader. However, at present, military chaplains are tasked with advising the command on issues of morale, morals, ethics, and religion and *how* these factors impact the mission. In combat, especially, the military expects chaplains to rally behind the cause of the country. Ed Waggoner, drawing from Pentagon documents, states that chaplains “as a multiplier of force... speak martially, patriotically, and divinely all at once.”³²

At face value, this is absolutely a chaplain’s role. It is essentially asking the chaplain to report on the morale of the service members. However, Waggoner shows how this role of “moral calibration” has the potential of being cloaked within a chaplain’s “soft-power.”³³ A chaplain is tasked to counsel service members on myriad issues that sprout from military service. This is a good thing. Chaplains, as the only people in the military ecosystem who hold complete confidentiality of privileged communications, can grasp the psychospiritual issues that are prevalent in combat. However, according to Waggoner, “The military wants chaplains to dispel prejudice against the enemy, but forbids them to promote an exchange of cultural or religious

³² Waggoner, “Taking Religion Seriously,” 718.

³³ Ibid., 717.

perspectives successful enough to ‘mitigate operational requirements and use of military force if necessary.’”³⁴

Waggoner’s concerns are valid: chaplains need to know, when they are asked about the morale of service members, is the question coming from a place of assessing combat strength or from a genuine concern for the men and women? I appreciate how complex that line can be. The role of a force multiplier is a complex position; yet, the chaplain’s role as an intellectual is more conducive to the long-term health of veterans. A force multiplier has little concern for long-term implications of getting a service member back “into the fight,” who may be suffering psychospiritually. All this to say, hastening a service member prematurely back “into the fight” can generate new issues—or exacerbate existing concerns, which is why I advocate an additional role of an intellectual. An intellectual role, then, provides service members with the mutual empowerment to move toward healing.

Returning to the overall movement of this chapter, I want to revise practices through the insights of this case study. Pattison’s *Locus theologicus* takes the chaplain only part of the way. Concrete practices are necessary to go the distance, and I now describe a liturgical model of communal practices of reconciliation and restoration as well as pastoral counseling practices within narrative therapy that provide chaplains with three modes of effective care conversations: a posture that is “decentered and influential,” the identification of unique outcomes, and the re-authoring of problem-laden stories.

Life Together: Counterhegemonic Communities

In chapter 4, Phillip lamented that upon reintegration from combat his prayer life was not the same, and his relationship to his previous religious community was not the same. He changed after combat, and needed a religious community that could adapt alongside him. We should

³⁴ Ibid., 717-718.

assist Phillip and other veterans in locating or co-creating a reintegration-ready theology; a theology for reintegration, and one that stands in opposition to easy answers about war, society, and theology. I now want to return more specifically to how reintegration could function within Hall's "retotalization." Hall's usage of retotalization is a helpful reminder in our thinking about reintegration: our current mode of bringing veterans home is not working.

A dominant-hegemonic ideology that insists that our societal refrain of "thank you for your service" and the various participating restaurants on Veterans Day and Memorial Day represent a sufficient salve to our war effort over the past seventeen years is isolating, egregiously dangerous, and, importantly, not cajoling our country any closer to *concluding* these wars (occupations). Former army chaplain and founder of the Austin, Texas, chapter of the Episcopal Veterans Fellowship, David Peters, states the matter succinctly: "Veterans do not need more barbeques, picnics, or trips to amusement parks. These are all nice and I have enjoyed most of them. What we do need is community, connection to ourselves, each other, and to God. In my view, the Church is the best organization to do this."³⁵

Therefore, Hall's oppositional reading position provides the creativity to ask different questions—which this dissertation has—and live different lives. Living different lives in the midst of a dominant American ideology is *not* easy. A responsible caregiver needs to claim this reality from the beginning. To stand up for our veterans—to truly take a stand—requires we "renounce the privilege of ignorance that the present-day American wars and to the extent that they renounce generalizations—promilitary, antimilitary, pro-US-foreign-policy, anti-US-

³⁵ David W. Peters, *Post-Traumatic God: How the Church Cares for People Who Have Been to Hell and Back* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2016), 105.

foreign-policy—in favor of close and sometimes painful attention to the war-torn bodies among them.”³⁶

The retotalization starts within religious communities, as it is religious communities that are situated to handle the spiritual distress, the MIEs, the ethical concerns of war’s moral ambiguities, and assist in re-authoring and externalizing previously unhelpful spiritual resources for some veterans. Finally, religious communities and their leaders, can function as “benevolent moral authorities.”³⁷ Military chaplains, as ones who can embody benevolent moral authorities, are situated to enact retotalized spiritual practices that assist in the reintegration of the veteran back into the religious community.

Healing takes place *within* communities in which both sides have something at stake; Phillip sought a reintegration that included neither unwarranted praise nor ostracizing, and he is able to acknowledge that some civilians are looking for meaningful ways to show gratitude for his sacrifices. The difference, for Phillip, was while deployed, individuals supported him. They were in close proximity. His “battle buddies” knew Phillip and knew when he was struggling. Significantly, they knew Phillip’s story. When Phillip came home, and attempted to reintegrate his experience, he was alone—he was not surrounded by people who knew his story. The intimacy of combat subsided into loneliness. A goal of what follows is to elucidate that the same communal intimacy previously available in combat is still available during reintegration. Therefore, how might counterhegemonic communities model religious practices of what I am calling a Liturgy of Solidarity? Counterhegemonic communities can “oppositionally” offer support to those suffering from an ideologically amplified moral injury.

³⁶ Kinghorn, “Combat Trauma,” 71.

³⁷ Litz et al., “Moral Injury,” 701-703.

Within reintegration and moral injury support, an “oppositional” reading provides two possibilities: for the veteran, it generates a process of normalization. This normalization concerns the veteran’s humanity, not necessarily the normalization of the MIE. The veteran will come to discover that the MIE fits as a smaller episode within the entire narrative of the toll of these wars. Second, for the civilian community, a posture of deep solidarity through listening, understanding, and support affects how one looks at the world. After learning the stories of MIEs and the impact they impart on lives, the lived experience *should* impact how one thinks, spends money, or votes. The counterhegemonic community provides the civilian with the space to reflect on how these conflicts take place in their name as well.

To elaborate further on this point, some civilians do want to help; there is helplessness, though, of being caught up in current ideological malaise. The difficulty has been creating spaces in which civilians *and* veterans attend. The civilian and military divide is real, and seventeen years of war have only widened that division. There *is* gratitude. There *is* support. What is missing, however, is the next step: specific and proactive steps of support to truly model gratitude. Counterhegemonic communities provide the space for civilians to be present to these stories, and bear the emotions they contain.

The schematics of a retotalized liturgy of solidarity will vary depending on the veteran and his or her level of trauma; however, with Phillip’s narrative in mind, there are certain aspects of his story that are transferable to others experiencing the amplifying effects of moral injury. The liturgy contains spiritual practices that remain relatively ordered and unchanged throughout the sessions. The established schematics leave room for spontaneity as well. The spontaneity is present within a veteran’s telling and retelling of the MIE. Elaine Ramshaw in her formative text, *Ritual and Pastoral Care*, describes the tension between order and spontaneity as:

The need for order and continuity is fundamental to the ritual purpose. When people say, “This is the way we have always done it,” they are saying something very precious in our fast-changing, mobile society... This does not mean, of course, that nothing can never be changed. It does mean that, even more than in other areas of congregational life, the introduction of change in ritual practice must be gradual and respectful of the need for continuity of practice.³⁸

The ritual that follows is adapted from my own Christian denominational context, the United Church of Christ. The intent of this adaptation is simple: an established and consistent ritual provides continuity and predictability for the community. Further, as Ramshaw notes, “the pastor’s role is to assist in the people’s creative task, through her knowledge of the church’s liturgical tradition and the people’s ritual needs.”³⁹

The schematics of this liturgy will also vary depending on civilian participation as well. This variance is not insurmountable; rather, it takes proactivity on behalf of the counterhegemonic community to include civilians in this reintegration liturgy of solidarity—civilians need reintegration as, like it or not, we have all been at war. The counterhegemonic community needs intentional spaces for co-constructing counternarratives of the war, MIEs, and the reintegration experience.

There is one vital caveat before unpacking the liturgy, and that is the overarching need for—and establishing of—safety. Before a veteran is invited to share a story that perhaps he or she has not shared with anyone else there must be, within that community, a commitment to creating a sacred covenant between veterans and civilian participants. Shay discusses the breakdown of safety and the implications of that on an ability to trust:

To encounter radical evil is to make one forever different from the trusting, “normal” person who wraps the rightness of the social order around himself snugly, like a cloak of safety. Trust, which was once an unthinking assumption

³⁸ Elaine Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 24-25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

and granted with no awareness of possible betrayal, is now a staggering accomplishment for the survivors of severe trauma.⁴⁰

The implementation of some basic covenantal assurances of confidentiality ensures a safe(r) environment for all involved. Besides the necessity to honor and maintain confidentiality, a commitment to deep listening is essential. This listening is not merely the lack of talking; rather, deep listening becomes a posture of solidarity as well. To listen, without the intent to solve, is a gift that we provide to our fellow counterhegemonic sojourners.

A Liturgy of Solidarity

The chaplain, as an “intellectual” leader and facilitator of the counterhegemonic group, models the response to one’s traumatic anguish: one in which we accompany, in solidarity, our fellow persons in their memories and pains. Using Phillip’s narrative of religious resources, a Liturgy of Solidarity would need to include *at minimum* an intentional space for a reexamined prayer life and a religious community that privileges the telling of *a* story. Beyond those two spiritual practices, a dedicated space for absolution is vital to the overall reconciliatory movement of this moral injury reintegration liturgy.

Greetings

To begin, the chaplain or designated facilitator welcomes the community together. In this signaling the facilitator seeks to orient participants to the space. After going over the covenantal assurances, the facilitator recites a modified version of Psalm 51:

Facilitator:

Have mercy on us, O God,
we unconventional warriors,
according to your steadfast love;
in your great compassion make us mindful of our offenses.
Those offenses imparted,
and those offenses we bear.
Wash us through and through,

⁴⁰ Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 185.

from our complicities.
 May you surround us
 and sustain us
 when our transgressions encircle us. *Amen.*

Following this adaptation of Psalm 51, the facilitator leads the community in prayer:

Facilitator:

Holy One,
 As we come, again, together before you and our community,
 remind us of those memories we bring,
 the memories too burdensome to bear,
 and remind us that You carry them too.
 May each individual in this community feel your presence,
 and be surrounded by your grace and peace.
 May this community be a community of neighbors,
 journeying together. *Amen.*

The liturgy starts with this greeting and prayer to not only signal that our time is beginning, but further to proclaim the power of memory in liturgy. The prayer signals what it is that this community is about. In this space and in this time, you are not forgotten. In a liberative liturgy, it is of critical importance that the participants realize that a liturgy of solidarity is not committed to maintaining the current societal reintegration work. The practices within this liturgy seek to be vulnerable, challenging, and restorative.

Following the greeting, the facilitator or a designated member of the community begins a candle lighting litany. The purpose of this practice is to further signal the intentionality of the space. The facilitator first lights a red candle, to symbolize the bloodshed from war. This bloodshed can symbolize the MIE that has brought the participant to the community, the death of loved ones during combat deployments, or the bloodshed of countless civilians in the countries the US is currently (or formerly) deployed. Further, red symbolizes—within the United Church of Christ—certain holidays, such as Memorial Day. Also, importantly, red represents the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross; therefore, this candle signals our mourning and complicities in our

transgressions. Red, finally, also symbolizes the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which reminds our participants of God's presence with us in our suffering. Following the lighting, this prayer is offered:

We light this candle as a reminder of our pain, loss, and mourning;
may this candle illumine in our hearts a reminder of all those who have suffered,
in the midst of war.
We mourn those on both sides—as there are *no* sides;
just Your created humanity.
Lead us toward healing. *Amen.*

The final candle lit in the litany is a green candle. Green, within the UCC, represents growth.

Green is, therefore, a reminder that as a community we are moving forward together. The counterhegemonic movement is *always* an emergent struggle. Following the lighting, this prayer is offered:

We light this candle as a reminder of our rejuvenation and growth;
may this candle illumine in our hearts a reminder of our struggle for peace,
in the midst of war.
We press on, together, to restore, reconcile,
and yearn for peace.
Lead us toward healing. *Amen.*

Following this litany, the liturgy moves into a time for sharing our stories.

Sharing our Stories

The liturgy of solidarity provides the space to tell *a* war story, not *the* war story. As I reflect on my own reintegration, I have yet to tell *the* story of my combat experience. Certain moods, friend cohorts, or memories elicit different narratives from my season in Afghanistan. Tim O'Brien comments on how time, memory, and war stories co-relate: "Often in a true war story there is not even a point, or else the point doesn't hit you until twenty years later, in your sleep, and wake up and shake your wife and start telling the story to her, except when you get to

the end you've forgotten the point again.”⁴¹ In tandem with the importance of pastoral counseling practices of narrative therapy (see below): reintegration is a process of re-storying one's combat experience.

The telling of a war story may be more difficult for civilians to fully understand. War stories are not like other stories. O'Brien's classic *The Things They Carried* explicates this reality exquisitely. I would recommend each counterhegemonic community read *The Things They Carried*, and in particular the chapter, “How to Tell a True War Story.” Few works of fiction get the reintegration experience as spot-on as O'Brien. Each member of the counterhegemonic community must remember “a true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue...if there's a moral at all, it's like the thread that makes the cloth. You can't tease it out. You can't extract meaning without unraveling the deeper meaning.”⁴²

The telling of a war story is not always a verbal affair. With Phillip's penchant for music—and specifically the ways in which music brought him back from war—art is a vital space to process and tell the stories of war. In a helpful February 2015 *National Geographic* cover story the use of art was shown to make significant improvements in overall coping for treating traumatic brain injuries. Service members were encouraged to create a “mask” that they believed depicted either their experience in combat or their experience reintegrating into civilian life. These masks gave credence to what actually happened from these individuals experience. Art therapist Melissa Walker encouraged this process, as it revealed “hidden feelings;” soldiers, though, were skeptical stating, “I wanted no part in it...Well, I was ignorant, and I was wrong because it is great. I think this is what started me kind of opening up and talking about stuff and

⁴¹ Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Mariner Books, 2009), 78.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 65, 74.

actually trying to get better.”⁴³ Art reached into an abyss to name raw emotions that perhaps could not have been met merely with words. The community is encouraged to share our stories in the manner in which the narrative insists.

To conclude this section, O’Brien puts it best: “In the end, of course, a true war story is never about war. It’s about the special way that dawn spreads out on a river when you know you must cross the river and march into the mountains and do things you are afraid to do. It’s about love and memory. It’s about sorrow. It’s about sisters who never write back and people who never listen.”⁴⁴ After an individual—or individuals—share their story, it is time to pray.

Prayers

Phillip wants to pray again. He was clear about that. Similar to his reflection about picking up the guitar again after his season away, there is a present numbness and new calluses needing to form before new habits can cement. The chaplain and the counterhegemonic community pray for those who cannot pray. The community is present *in* prayer. The prayer section contains an individual prayer that the participants can recite aloud or internally and also a corporate prayer to acknowledge the societal implications of these wars. Built into this time is a time for silence and solitude. Within this silence, participants can offer personal prayers, continue to recite the corporate prayer, meditate, or utilize the time in ways that are meaningful for them. First, the individual prayer:

Facilitator:

Holy One,
We come before you, thankful for another day
to live into your glory.
We pray that we would realize this gift.
In those moments, though,
of suffering, pain, and death
we look for you;

⁴³ Caroline Alexander, “The Invisible War on the Brain,” *National Geographic*, February 2015, 44.

⁴⁴ O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*, 81.

we look for your Son.
 We are comforted, that the Triune God suffers too:
 Creator, Liberator, and Healer.
 Search us, sustain us.
 Examine what needs to be examined;
 lament what needs to be lamented;
 heal what needs to be healed.
 For the grace and peace that surrounds us,
 we give You thanks. *Amen.*

At the conclusion of the individual prayer, a time of silence ensues. Following silence, the corporate prayer is next. A corporate prayer is a vital element of the Liturgy of Solidarity as it provides the space for the veterans *and* the community to acknowledge the presence of war, moral injury, and the ramifications of those realities. The prayer acknowledges that it is *not* merely a veteran “problem,” but it is a situation in which humanity must move forward toward reconciliation and healing together.

Facilitator:
 Let us pray.

Facilitator and Community:
 We come before you today a broken people.
 Some broken by the memories of actions we cannot undo;
 others broken by an inaction we never knew we asked you to do.
 We have gone to wars;
 we have sent you to wars.
 We all come home.
 We all suffer;
 we beseech You, come.
 Grant us the courage to stand up for what we believe;
 forgive us when we fail to do so.
 Mend our divisions;
 may we care for our neighbors.
 As the One who suffers with,
 surround us.
 In Your Grace and Peace, we pray. *Amen.*

After a time of prayer—both individual and corporate—the liturgy is prepared to begin confession and forgiveness.

Absolution: Confession and Forgiveness

The United Church of Christ's *Book of Worship* begins the Order for Corporate

Reconciliation with a prayer of confession that prepares the entire community for confession:

Facilitator and Community:

Holy One,
 our sins are too heavy
 to carry, too real to hide,
 and too deep to undo.
 Forgive what our lips tremble to name,
 what our hearts can no longer bear, and what has
 become for us a consuming fire of judgment.
 Set us free from a past
 that we cannot change;
 open to us a future in which
 we can be changed;
 and grant us grace to grow
 more and more
 in your likeness and image;
 through Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.*⁴⁵

Confession is a spiritual discipline and practice that enables the veteran *and* civilian an opportunity to account for the actions that took place within his or her MIE. It is crucial to stress that from a caregiving perspective, a chaplain should not offer confession *as a means of forgiving "sin" and therefore placing blame*. Traditional theological categories of sin—in which actions are done *to* God—are not necessarily helpful, as they can continue to isolate the veteran from the community. Process theologian Marjorie Suchocki, reminds us, “We are ourselves corporately responsible for the societies we create and the ill effects they engender.”⁴⁶ Sin, too, must be reconceptualized within a communal understanding. There is a communal responsibility for these wars and, therefore, a communal responsibility for reckoning with their consequences.

⁴⁵ Adapted from United Church of Christ, *Book of Worship* (Cleveland: United Church of Christ Press, 2012), 271. In the spirit of UCC polity, I have revised to meet my context.

⁴⁶ Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), 15.

Sin “always affects society.”⁴⁷ With that expansion in mind, throughout this liturgy I use “transgression” instead of “sin.” In Jinkerson’s symptomology from chapter 2, guilt and shame are primary responses to a MIE; therefore, the confession and forgiveness within the liturgy is structured around this reality and intentional in the wording to avoid further traumatizing.

All of this is not to say that there is not a place for taking accountability for the MIE and proactively taking steps to mend the pain imparted or experienced. With that said, the liturgy moves into a time of confession. In chapter 2 I touched on Harris’s Building Spiritual Strengths (BSS) as a spiritual intervention model. BSS is of particular interest because within steps six (explore theodicy [spiritual explanations for suffering]), and seven (explore and reframe forgiveness of self and others), the participant has the opportunity to explore forgiveness for others, self, or a Higher Power. The ongoing forgiveness is appropriate because “forgiveness is discussed as an ongoing process of maintaining an appropriate relationship with the one in need of forgiveness, rather than a ‘forgive and forget’ approach to resolving conflict.”⁴⁸

Facilitator:

In the Name of the triune God:
Creator, Liberator, and Healer.

Facilitator and Community:
Amen.

Facilitator:

Let us pray:

Facilitator and Community:

Holy One,
from whom comes all holy desires and just works,
breathe into our hearts by your Holy Spirit
the gift of obedient faith,
that we, knowing your will,
may treasure these words in our minds and hearts

⁴⁷ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 90.

⁴⁸ Harris et al., “Trauma-focused Spiritually Integrated Intervention,” 428.

and may in all things love and serve you. *Amen.*

Facilitator:

Since we have a
great high priest
who has passed through the
heavens, Jesus, the only one
begotten by God,

Facilitator and Community:

Let us then
with confidence
draw near to the
throne of grace,
that we may
receive mercy
and find grace
to help in time of need.

Facilitator:

Let us confess our transgressions

Facilitator and Community:

Have mercy on us, Holy One,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out our transgressions.
Create in us
a clean heart,
Restore to us the joy of your salvation
through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

The community now observes a time of silence. This silence is utilized for personal confession, prayer, meditation, or in whichever manner the participant feels is appropriate. When the veteran is ready, forgiveness is imparted, as a way of absolving guilt and shame. The liturgy, therefore, transitions into a time of assurances of pardoning from our transgressions.

Facilitator:

Jesus said to a sinner:
Where are your accusers?
Has no one condemned you?

Facilitator and Community:

Neither do I
condemn you;
go, and sin no more.⁴⁹

Prayer of Peace (Benediction)

Following the sharing of stories, prayers, confession and absolution, the official liturgy concludes with a Prayer of Peace, modified from the *Book of Worship* of the United Church of Christ. The prayer focuses on peace as this is the message that the counterhegemonic community imparts to each member and their community. The peace is not merely the absence of war, but it is the peace that is on offer that a liberative God is co-suffering in those very moments with us.

Therefore, we conclude:

Facilitator:

Go forth into the world in peace;
be of good courage;
hold fast to that
which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted;
support the weak;
help the afflicted;
honor all people;
love and serve God,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*⁵⁰

The Liturgy of Solidarity can take place in any setting. Further, the liturgy is malleable enough to be done quickly or with even further intentionality. The point of the liturgy, though, is to come together with reverence for the memories of one another's war experiences. The way we as a society begin to oppose dominant-hegemonic ideological "readings" of war stories is through the intentionality of Thornton's "nonabandonment through solidarity."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Adapted from United Church of Christ, *Book of Worship*, 277-285. In the spirit of UCC polity, I have revised to meet my context.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 288. In the spirit of UCC polity, I have revised to meet my context.

⁵¹ Thornton, *Broken Yet Beloved*, 123.

Beyond the liturgy, it may also be therapeutic for the community to proactively take steps to atone for MIEs via public—or community—service. Public service affords the veteran and the community time together supporting and serving the community in a broader cause. Veterans who miss the mission focus of military life could benefit from working together for a new common cause. Further, as Moon elaborates, “The simple task of building a house or cleaning up the neighborhood can provide inviting, non-judgmental, and mutually empowering experiences for all participants.”⁵² Timing wise, these events could be scheduled around major holidays (Veterans Day, Memorial Day, or the Fourth of July), or around specifically meaningful days for the community (e.g., in remembrance of a fallen battle buddy). Even without the intentionality of timing, the service offered can be offered at any point. Beyond the liturgy, there is still an important place within the healing process for pastoral counseling, to which we now turn.

Unique Outcomes & Re-Authoring MIEs in Community: A Narrative Therapy Perspective

Dominant ideologies can be opposed. Military chaplains are positioned to provide “oppositional” spiritual care to veterans within counterhegemonic communities. This positioning is supported by approaches to spiritual care within a narrative therapy perspective. What is most compelling about narrative therapy perspectives, and conducive to privileging counterhegemonic communities, is the *posture* employed by the chaplain. Through narrative therapy’s understanding of truth—that it is produced, rather than objective—Phillip is empowered to utilize his personal inner resources, which can create new meanings in moving toward repairing core narratives.

⁵² Moon, “(Re)Turning Warriors,” 119.

I understand the positioning of the chaplain in these relationships as a *posture*, reflecting Michael White's insistence that a therapist be "decentered and influential."⁵³ White notes that clients find the narrative practices of externalizing conversations and developing a statement of position map unusual because they are familiar with a therapist being in control and diagnosing problems. In other words, therapists solve problems. White offers a unique alternative that is conducive to military chaplaincy. The therapist is decentered in that "the therapist is not the author of people's positions on the problems and predicaments of their lives," and therapists are influential in that therapists introduce the categories of inquiry that provide "people with an opportunity to define their own position in relation to their problems and to give voice to what underpins this position."⁵⁴ Within my proposed framework, a chaplain is decentered and influential because the chaplain does not "solve" moral injury, and importantly, is present to cocreate meaning out of the MIE experience.

During my second-to-last visit with Phillip, we returned to discussing his MIE. I was curious and a little concerned with how Phillip told the story of his MIE: He internalized all the blame. Using narrative therapy as my clinical approach, I started to inquire about narrative gaps to possibly locate the unique outcomes—times when Phillip was not entirely to blame—in Phillip's story. Unique outcomes become the starting point for re-authoring, which follows from this extract. Within unique outcomes, chaplains are looking to construct a "scaffold through questions that encourage people to fill these gaps."⁵⁵

Phillip: Why didn't he [the driver of the other vehicle] stop?

Chaplain: I don't know.

Phillip: (*Long pause. Phillip would start a sentence, and stop quickly.*)

CH: Do you want to talk more about that?

⁵³ White, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, 39.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Madigan, *Narrative Therapy*, 171.

Phillip: The mission wasn't even that important. We were just picking up an old MRAP [mine-resistant ambush protected. Modern trucks driven in Afghanistan/Iraq to protect against IEDs] that had some engine issues.

CH: I see.

Phillip: I drove the lead vehicle of the convoy that day.

CH: What did that entail?

Phillip: Well, besides driving, I tried to scan the area for IED indicators. I was already on edge. We had been on alert for a suspicious vehicle and then that bus I told you about hit my mirror. I felt...*on*...

CH: On?

Phillip: Like ready for whatever was going to happen.

CH: Ah, okay, that makes sense to me.

Phillip: None of this was new. We had been on probably fifteen missions at this point. We had seen some things, but no damage you know?

CH: Right. What do you think was different with that convoy?

Phillip: The people usually move out of the way... Why didn't he slow down? He had to know I wasn't going to slow down.

CH: Right. Seeing military vehicles approach would make me... well, stop, I guess!

Phillip: Exactly!

CH: What do *you* think he was thinking? Can you put yourself in his car?

Phillip: Yeah . . . I think so . . .

CH: What do you think?

Phillip: "Maybe I should get out of the way."

CH: Right. Why wouldn't he want to get out the way?

Phillip: I don't know... Maybe he is tired of moving out of the way.

CH: I can see that. Thank you. . .

Phillip describes the stress of maintaining constant composure on a convoy—completely engaged, all of his senses. His eyes moved from left to right constantly—almost as if he was jittery on an unhealthy amount of caffeine. He listened to the commands over his headset—as clear as they could be—and tried to listen to the banter of the other soldiers in his truck. Growing up, he always had his windows down in the truck, with his left arm resting on the doorframe. He loved hearing the wind and the various other road sounds that accompanied him. In Afghanistan, though, his hearing was restricted to what he could hear in his headset. For safety reasons, his windows were always up—and so thick due to the bulletproofing that he could not hear anything through them. He was sweaty, seemingly all the time. Convoys were always hot. Whether it was

the forty pounds of kit he had to wear—from his helmet to his body armor— or the actual desert heat, dripping sweat was a constant companion. Phillip learned the physiological differences in his sweating. Since he was *always* sweating, he noticed that when he was anxious, his palms were sweating more. He was more aware of his sweating during anxiety-inducing moments.

As Phillip re-stories the event years later, he has internalized the MIE and has not been able to fully process and make meaning out of the event since nothing “wrong”—in an official capacity—took place, per se. Remember, from chapter 3, although Phillip followed the SOP, Phillip was put in a position in which both the procedures and his Lieutenant insisted he proceed forward, while the driver did not stop. He was encouraged that he did the right thing. This did not erase the internalizing of the event when we met years later. The meaning was already inscribed on him. One aspect of the MIE that was interesting to explore was *why* the Afghan man did not slow down. The fact that Afghan locals were expected by their US military occupiers to move out of the way or slow down, in their own country, was a given. Was Phillip able to see the ambiguity of this relationship? From a narrative perspective, I wanted Phillip to broaden the event. In broadening he would come to see that he was not the only “actor” making decisions on the road. When Phillip returned for our last visit and interview, I wanted to explore possible unique outcomes of that day in 2013.

Phillip returned two weeks later for our final session. After catching up for a couple minutes, we continued to process his reintegration experience and in particular reintegrating his MIE with civilians:

CH: So, how have the last couple weeks been? How is *Ashley* [granddaughter]?

Phillip: I have been doing ok... she is great, though. We watched *Frozen* three more times.

CH: I bet you have that memorized! I have been thinking about something you said in our first meeting that I want to ask about, is that ok?

Phillip: What's that?

CH: You spoke about meeting civilians who don't know what to say, and say "you must have had it rough," or "thank you for your service." I have been thinking about that, and about the young men you spoke about who just want to kill like *American Sniper*. Now, you have been there, what's it like having your experiences from Afghanistan and trying to come home?

Phillip: Being in the Reserves is not exciting. Remember that NAVY Seal I told you about?

CH: I do.

Phillip: (*Long pause.*) He should be thanked more. He did "it."

CH: What's "it"? Say more.

Phillip: Sought out the bad guys. I was just *there*. That is so hard to tell people. We aren't kicking down doors. We are just there.

CH: Being "there" isn't the same though?

Phillip: I mean... it is. People don't want to hear my story, though.

CH: Hmm. Say more.

Phillip: I drove trucks. I cleaned weapons. I lifted weights. Big deal.

CH: Ah. But you were *there* though.

Phillip: (*After a long pause*) I was. Vicki would agree with you.

CH: I bet. Families don't "know" how deployments are compared to others.

Phillip: Without an FSC, stuff doesn't get to the guys.

CH: Exactly. To achieve our mission, *we need you*.

Phillip: I have never thought of being "needed."

CH: Do you think people want to hear that story?

Phillip: Maybe. It certainly isn't Hollywood, though.

CH: That's ok though, that's war.

The goal of this session was to begin constructing unique outcomes of Phillip's reintegration process. Pastoral theologian Edward Wimberly helpfully reminds caregivers that a unique outcome "contradicts the way information had been organized."⁵⁶ There were two unique outcomes of Phillip's experience: the fact from the above vignette that Phillip was not alone as an actor making decisions. The other driver did not stop. Second, it is through his narrative that people will learn that without support units (like an FSC) the combatant units cannot succeed. Put bluntly: without support units there is no *American Sniper*. These pieces of information could contradict his narrative of alienation as they allow Phillip to begin generating a new narrative mindful of these (previously unexamined) gaps.

⁵⁶ Edward Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 76.

Re-authoring is also an essential practice because it takes the pressure off the chaplain to “solve” the veteran’s problem. Narrative therapy provides a posture of comfort in uncomfortable, seemingly unsolvable situations. In that final interview Phillip and I discussed the ongoing theological implications of his reintegration, and his experience of spiritual betrayal. This returns to Phillip’s third theme:

Phillip: After our last time together, I talked to Vicki...

CH: Oh, yeah, how was that?

Phillip: It was okay. She said she has been praying for me.

CH: Is that new?

Phillip: No. She always would tell me she was praying for me in Afghanistan... usually in a Facebook message.

CH: What’s that like for you? Knowing your wife was praying for you?

Phillip: I liked it, then. She was one person praying, and I had a lot in my unit.

CH: What’s prayer like now?

Phillip: I used to pray prior to rolling out of the gate on a mission. I would pray while driving, I would pray before bed.

CH: You said “used to”; what changed?

Phillip: I don’t hear anything back. I get nothing.

CH: You used to hear God?

Phillip: Yes. Not like an actual voice, but I had peace.

CH: That peace is gone?

Phillip: Yes, since I got home. I am still trying to figure it out. I don’t know... I had the chapel services and Bible studies. I don’t have that close of a connection anymore. I felt thrown into the world over there? When I think about it now I still just get more confused. I still pray every day and I thank God for my life – and my grandbaby. That is a *real* joy in my life. I thank God for that. I still, though, don’t know about my daily life and forget that God is here with me now. There is something about how serious everything was, with faith, with family, with my own life.

CH: Was God with you in Afghanistan?

Phillip: Yes! I felt strong because of him. I had people around me who held me up. People held me up. In the middle of a mission—like when we broke down in the middle of a valley—I didn’t necessarily feel abandoned. When I got home, though, I felt abandoned by everything.

CH: Is God with you now?

Phillip: I don’t know. I wish I knew.

CH: That makes sense. That matches everyone else in your story. SFC Clausen left, the unit abandoned you, and you were separated from Vicki—your support system was crumbling.

Phillip: Yes.

CH: What would it look like for God to be here now?

Phillip: I don't know . . . Remember that photo I showed you about my experience at Christmas time [referencing the boy with one shoe playing with rocks mentioned in chapter 3]?

CH: Yes, I do.

Phillip: When I would see families outside the wire, and when we would wave at each other there was a weird feeling of . . . I don't know . . . connection?

CH: Connection?

Phillip: Yeah, like something holy was happening. I was there to support those families, and I felt like they knew that.

CH: That's powerful.

Phillip: Is God with those families now—or me?

CH: I think so. What do *you* think, though?

Phillip: I hope so.

CH: Do you think God was affected by the accident [referencing the MIE]? Does your pain matter to God?

Phillip: What?

CH: Was God sad, moved, angry, upset, or some other emotion after that day on the road?

Phillip: I hope he is sad.

CH: Tell me about what it might mean for God to be sad about our losses.

Phillip: He would have to be there to *feel* it, you know?

CH: Yes, I do. I agree.

Phillip: I could get around to that...

Using narrative therapy allowed me to think narratively and attempt to expand his theological reflection and see where he was in his theological narrative—as well as where God was. Further, as with previous interactions, I was looking for unique outcomes from previous, or current, theological reflections. Essentially, how has God “behaved” in other instances? Was God reliable? God had been reliable to Phillip. What might provide healing is a narrative of a God that is with Phillip in the midst of his pain, isolation, and abandonment. As a military chaplain, one of my overall goals is, as pastoral theologian, Karen Scheib, reminds us: proclaim God's solidarity with us in our suffering.⁵⁷ This theological reflection *is* possible. Returning, once again, to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and to liberation theologies offers inroads for the implications of a suffering God.

Only A Suffering God can Help: Bonhoeffer and Liberation Theologies

⁵⁷ Karen D. Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 29.

In chapter 5 I noted that Bonhoeffer's theology of sociality impacts his entire life's work. Also, within chapter 5's abbreviated biography, I stopped at the Nazi Gestapo's closing of Finkenwalde, the Confessing Church's seminary. Finkenwalde closed its doors at the end of 1937. Bonhoeffer would not be arrested until 1943, so he continued his work of resistance. This point in Bonhoeffer's life was trying. Although Dietrich was eligible for military service—born between 1906 and 1907—he did not want to join. Avoiding military service would prove difficult. Dietrich decided, in November of 1940, to accept military service. Dietrich accepted a position in the Abwehr, as this would keep him a safe distance from a *real* military call up or arrest. The Abwehr was, loosely, the counter-intelligence agency. The Abwehr had long been involved in plans to overthrow or assassinate Hitler. Bonhoeffer portrayed himself as a pastor in the Abwehr as one unfamiliar with military duties. The Gestapo ultimately arrested Bonhoeffer in March of 1943 on charges of “subversion of the armed forces,” and imprisoned him in Tegel. He was later sent to Buchenwald concentration camp in February of 1945, moved to Flossenbürg in April, and executed on April 9th.

While in prison, Bonhoeffer wrote letters, book fragments and proposals, wedding sermons, and devotional material later compiled by lifelong confidant, Eberhard Bethge, and published as *Letters and Papers from Prison*. These letters were in correspondence to his family and most importantly to Bethge. Bonhoeffer's prison *Letters* offer a final opportunity to decipher how to live in community in a society that has “come of age,” and how a suffering God can help reintegrate veterans experiencing moral injury. A world that has “come of age” is the culmination of a shift—one that Bonhoeffer signaled in *Sanctorum Communio*—in which humanity has complete objective autonomy. Humanity does not need the divine to solve problems, since reason now resides completely with the individual person. Bonhoeffer's world

“come of age” should not necessarily be read in a pejorative manner: Bonhoeffer is not elevating one type of position over the next. He is more interested in humanity’s response to existential questions. Further, humanity living in a world “come of age” takes responsibility for one’s actions, and do rely on outside resources. Religion, then, represents a God that is banished to the periphery and becomes a “*deus ex machina*” swooping in to solve humanity’s problems.⁵⁸ For Bonhoeffer, the societal gravitation toward secularization (and therefore the movement away from the divine) is not concerning because it emphasizes that Christianity is *of this world* and committed to the lived experience of this world.

Instead of a *deus ex machina*, Bonhoeffer’s Jesus represents a God of “powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help.”⁵⁹ Bonhoeffer, asking a similar question to Phillip’s, wants to know about those “anxious souls” that will ask “what room there is left for God now....”⁶⁰ Bonhoeffer, ultimately, agrees with Phillip—the arbitrary God that swoops in to protect God’s people *abandoned* Phillip. There is a twist before Bonhoeffer’s proposal, however. Bonhoeffer states that God “compels” humanity to embrace—live into—God’s absence. It is the same absence Jesus felt on the cross and recorded in the Gospel according to Mark: “At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”⁶¹

For Bonhoeffer, it is on the cross that God has allowed Godself an alienation from the world “come of age.” However, that alienation and death on the cross is precisely where hope is cultivated. The hope is cultivated in two instances: first, the omnipotence of Phillip’s God that

⁵⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 361. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 360.

⁶¹ Mark 15:34.

disappeared during reintegration is resurrected into a God that, in weakness and suffering, is in solidarity with him. The Apostle Paul says as much:

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.⁶²

God, through the event of the cross and resurrection, is able to remain in solidarity with the pain, desolation, and abandonment of humanity. Bonhoeffer is not alone in this assertion. Black liberation theologians also note that Jesus, as the crucified one, is in solidarity with the oppressed. James Cone makes this point most emphatically in two of his works, 1975’s *God of the Oppressed* and 2011’s *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*.⁶³

In *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Cone attempts to rehabilitate the cross and its centrality for the black community. Cone methodically connects the cross with the lynching era, from 1880-1940, in which white people legally executed thousands of black people. Even those white people who did not *actually do* the lynching participated in the spectacle of lynching by attending the “event”: upwards of 20,000 people attended. For Cone, the terror of lynching represents a similar terror of crucifixion. Cone states, “like Jesus, hanging on a cross, this nameless black victim, hanging on a Georgia tree, was left to a shameful death....”⁶⁴ Of course, the excruciating pain was administered to the individual on the apparatus, but the terror was also

⁶² 1 Cor 1:18-25.

⁶³ James H. Cone, *The God of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 1997); James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011).

⁶⁴ Cone, *Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 77.

for the audience: this is what happens to political dissidents. The apparatuses were visual reminders. To live in the reality of the lynch mobs, demanded a need for a theological solidarity with the cross. Therefore, following the same ontological argument as Cone's *God of the Oppressed*, Cone argues that God not only identifies *as* black, God further identifies with the lynched because God, too, was lynched. More specifically, Jesus was hated, arrested, subject to a phony trial, humiliated, and executed. Jesus, therefore, has sympathy, as he is literally "suffering-with."⁶⁵

Phillip felt "thrown into the world" once he got home, and a suffering God knows that and is with him in that. The previous understanding of God—Bonhoeffer's *deus ex machina*—understands power differently. The God that Bonhoeffer and the various liberation theologians are advocating has power in suffering. Cone speaks to this paradoxical reality of God's power noting that its paradox comes via a dialectic, and an example par excellence of this dialectic: "A symbol of death and defeat, God turned [the cross] into a sign of liberation and new life."⁶⁶ Therefore, the dialectic must remain: The suffering and the helping; God's weakness and God's strength; God's incarnation in Jesus and God's transcendence. Maintaining the dialectic is what holds the potential for transformation. Jesus's alienation on the cross matches Phillip's alienation upon reintegration.

Further, this alienation may continue; a Liturgy of Solidarity may take time to truly mend the wounds of war. Therefore, the chaplain's role through liturgy, pastoral counseling, or solidarity through accompaniment is to continue to show up; to continue to represent a God of strength through God's weakness. In other words, change and healing are slow processes, and through the long unraveling of time the chaplain and the community's role is to sustain those

⁶⁵ Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 16.

⁶⁶ Cone, *Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 156.

individuals on that journey. There is grace in this each step of this journey; from the first telling of a war story, to the umpteenth “thank you for your service,” liberation is ongoing.

Second, hope is cultivated through a suffering God in that humanity is now empowered to take accountability and responsibility for caring for our neighbors. For the development of a counterhegemonic community, a suffering God has implications for the community as well. God is able, through Jesus, to be with humanity, truly in their lived experiences. Bonhoeffer elaborates this as, “His ‘being there for others’, maintained till death, that is the ground of his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.”⁶⁷ The church, the community, or the small counterhegemonic communities I am advocating participate in this presence. The calling, then, is one of solidarity with one another. In Latinx liberation theologies, this solidarity is experienced as a strengthening in our suffering not only for others but also for ourselves. This solidarity is immensely hopeful. God went through it, Jesus went through it, and so we can go through it. Humanity experiences God’s transcendence through our neighbors, those individuals who are co-suffering, and co-journeying in solidarity. God is in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday).⁶⁸ Jesus is rooted to the veterans experiencing moral injury. The “church is the church only when it exists for others,” as Bonhoeffer reminds us.⁶⁹ This is elaborated as taking on the problems of the world, through service to one another.

To conclude, Bonhoeffer’s suffering God relates to the world “come of age.” Writing to Eberhard, he notes:

During the last year or so I’ve come to know and understand more and more the profound this-worldliness of Christianity. The Christian is not a *homo religiosus*, but simply a man, as Jesus was a man...I discovered later, and I’m still discovering right up to this moment that is it only by living completely in this

⁶⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 381.

⁶⁸ Miguel A. De La Torre, *The Politics of Jesús: A Hispanic Political Theology* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2015), 86.

⁶⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 382.

world that one learns to have faith... By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own suffering, but those of God in the world—watching with Christ in Gethsemane.⁷⁰

This dissertation has been an attempt at taking seriously the suffering of “those of God in the world.” Phillip’s story is one of suffering and alienation, but a suffering God can help. Before providing closing remarks on this study, I want to offer best practices of theological reflection and interpretation on when I would have introduced a suffering God.

Best Practices and Theological Interpretation

I began to officially introduce verbiage of a suffering God to Phillip. However, it fell outside of our time together, but I want to briefly address how introducing a new theological interpretation is possible in a caregiving relationship, and what considerations I take into account when deciding whether or not to address it. Within Osmer’s normative task of practical theology, a practical theologian brings “ethical norms,” values, and presuppositions into each situation—or, for me, into each pastoral counseling session.⁷¹ Within my own theological reflection, I bring the values of a suffering God into the room with me. Those values are supported by the various liberative praxis methods that have strengthened this dissertation: God’s solidarity with the marginalized, God’s presence in history in peoples’ pain, and the radiant possibility of hope moving forward toward restoration. Introducing these new ideas to Phillip originated out of discerning my own curiosity and how I understood Phillip storying his narrative. In the third vignette above, I started to address my curiosity, slowly, by asking:

CH: Do you think God was affected by the accident [referencing the MIE]? Does your pain matter to God?

Phillip: What?

⁷⁰ Ibid., 369-370.

⁷¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 131.

CH: Was God sad, moved, angry, upset, or some other emotion after that day on the road?

Phillip: I hope he is sad.

CH: Tell me about what it might mean for God to be sad about our losses.

Phillip: He would have to be there to *feel* it, you know?

CH: Yes, I do. I agree.

Phillip: I could get around to that...

I was introducing a reflection to gauge its significance for Phillip; essentially, would a suffering God resonate? After I asked Phillip about God's emotions, if he did not engage the idea or if he provided a different understanding of how God was affected by the MIE, I would not have pursued the suffering God motif further. Continuing to import my ethical and theological norms into a pastoral counseling session, while presupposing that Phillip is not bringing his own norms, is unethical and anathema to the methods of a liberative praxis of pastoral care and narrative therapy.

Future Research Opportunities

It is possible to oppose dominant ideologies. Individuals cannot do it alone, but rather, a community is needed in which each member is committed to opposing dominance. This opposition will take all the intellectual and creative energy of a community. This opposition is a slow process as well. It takes time to build trust and rapport in communities, and the task asks for a vulnerability to share one's story—perhaps a story that has not been shared with anyone previously.

Methodologically, case studies play “a critical role in developing the foundation from which more advanced studies can be developed.”⁷² The transferability gained through this instrumental case study has been insightful in moving our commitment toward the actual lived experience of veterans and broadening our perspective that only one “type” of veteran is

⁷² Fitchett, “Making Our Case(s),” 5.

venerable. Further, the particularization of this case remains intact: locating generalizations in other research opportunities comes precisely from knowing Phillip's story well.

Robert Stake, a case study researcher, describes the generalizations (or transferability) that can come from an instrumental single case study as “naturalistic generalizations.”⁷³ These generalizations rely on people drawing similar conclusions to other veterans they have met. For example, by sheer numbers, civilians will know more veterans who fit into Phillip's camp as a reservist—or even knowing veterans in a support role—than knowing individuals who occupy a veteran “hero” role (i.e., the special operations “operators”). The more civilians reflect on the type of veterans they know from their community, the dominant ideologies of the heroic and the head case veteran will become the exception as narratives like Phillip's will come to the fore. Once the narrative is broadened and the lived experience of not only Phillip's story is taken into account, but the narrative of veterans all over the country are taken into account, generalizations will come. With that in mind, there are three areas in which this case study can elicit further reflection and study.

First, theologically, this dissertation was limited to a reintegration experience of a Christian who is a nondenominational evangelical Christian. Much of the framework and the Liturgy of Solidarity, then, is built around a Christian ecclesiology of religious communities. Even within Christianity there is enough variance to necessitate different practices and commitments of a counterhegemonic group. Broaden these communities beyond Christianity, and the differences are more pronounced. However, I still contend that practices of reconciliation via prayer, sharing mutual concern, sharing one's story, and the place of confession is still available outside of Christianity as well. With that said, the tension between spontaneity and order that I addressed above is all the more important at this point; namely, the liturgy can—and

⁷³ Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, 85.

should—be adapted to fit the religious and spiritual needs of those within the counterhegemonic community.

Second—perhaps naïvely—what becomes the long-term support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? In chapter 2 I noted that Brock’s anti-war posture was a limiting factor in her soul repair model. However, there must be a differentiation between an anti-war that obfuscates the lived reality of veterans, and an anti-war position that is “oppositionally” counterhegemonic. Would this platform defeat itself without the support of veterans who are not anti-war? How can LaMothe’s “unconventional warriors,” be expanded as a platform for reintegration?

Finally, it is difficult to imagine ongoing support of these wars, if one is able to hold in tension the traumatic tolls they entail. PTSD, moral injury, increasing suicide rates, and a globe reeling from America’s hegemonic foreign policy are all alarming. The counterhegemonic communities I am proposing have the responsibility to broaden the intellectual and creative imagery for ending these wars. After ideological imagery shifts, awareness would be raised concerning the effects of these wars. Military chaplains are on the front lines of this shift, this *war of position*. In the caregiving relationship, though, on a smaller scale, military chaplains assist in bringing veterans—completely—home. Speaking to this, Chaplain Herman “Herm” Keizer Jr., original codirector of the Soul Repair Center with Rita Brock, describes the role of a military chaplain:

I am constantly amazed that the people to whom chaplains minister continue to trust us with their stories, opening themselves in conversations both painful and prideful; complex in their simplicity and simple in their complexity; wonderful and terrible stories that reveal the vulnerability and resiliency of the human spirit. They share their life stories with us and welcome us into their narrative, allowing us to interpret their stories with them.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Brock and Lettini, *Soul Repair*, 79-80.

Chaplains live in the ambiguity. Yes, this is a dissertation about critiquing and challenging ideological imagery that complicates reintegration. However, on the personal, caregiving level, military chaplains must not forget that it is a hallowed ground in which veterans “share their life stories with us and welcome us into their narrative, allowing us to interpret their stories with them,” which continues to cause pause for reflection; interpreters of stories are needed.⁷⁵

These small, yet life-giving, counseling sessions allow veterans to re-author a debilitating narrative that has caused personal, familial, and societal struggles. From these “living human documents” care is reconceptualized on a broader scale, impacting families, religious communities, and society-at-large. Remember, again, care is Miller-McLemore’s “living human document within the web.” Change comes slowly, but change is possible.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 80.

Appendix A

Sigmund Freud and War

Phillip's Christian faith sustained him in combat, and in more specific ways, his Christianity tied in directly with how he fashioned himself as a warrior. In chapter 4 I mentioned his propensity to rely on passages, such as John 15:13, "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends," and it is important to note that dying for another, and being prepared to do it, is a common sacrificial and redemptive theme in military service. For some Christian service members it is a reality that is treated with almost gospel reverence. The guilt and shame connected to *failing* to die for a brother or sister in arms is almost too much to bear. Brett Litz and Jessica Carney note "grief stemming from warzone losses is arguably akin to that from the loss of children to violence—one of the worst human experiences."¹ This propensity toward death can be analyzed through what Sigmund Freud called the death drive. Approaching an oeuvre as all encompassing as Freud's can be an overwhelming endeavor. However, to discuss Freud's death drive, I will get to that theme in the manner in which he got there, circuitously, through his analysis of World War I trauma. Therefore, I will narrow my scope and identify the sources I will reference, since this will help sharpen this section. I am focusing on Freud's article "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," written about six months after the outbreak of World War I, and on his 1920 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Freud on the Horrors of War

Six months after the outbreak of The Great War, Freud wrote his thoughts on war and its implications not only for soldiers, but also for societies that send soldiers to war. What is remarkable about Freud's writing is the way in which it provides a timeless presentation of war.

¹ Litz and Carney, "Employing Loving-Kindness," 2.

Freud notes the constant confusion of war, the reliance on information that is mired in the fog of war, the nationalistic sense in which battles represent a mythical conflict of good versus evil, and the absolutely precarious stance humanity takes toward war's destruction. This article is less about the "combatant," that "cog in the gigantic machine of war," and more about the role of killing and reintegrating that experience back into society.² Later, Freud addressed the themes of trauma and reintegration in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. His 1915 article, though, is primarily concerned with the non-combatants. Freud's thoughts on war are broken into two sections: one on disillusionment and another on humanity's attitude toward death. I will examine them in turn.

Freud's point throughout the disillusionment section is instructive for society today as well. As the United States has engaged in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, and with its ongoing presence in Syria, the Horn of Africa, and South Korea, the disillusionment that Freud unpacks is still relevant for American non-combatants. The first point that is instructive for today is Freud's insistence that society must have a voice in conversations about war. The community is crucial for its work in keeping the state in check in relation to its involvement in global conflicts. These objections counteract "evil passions ... of cruelty, fraud, treachery, and barbarity."³ Freud posits that most people do not question the state because this would dismantle the illusion of the state as representing a "civilized world."

The illusion that needs to be dismantled is precisely the idea of "civilized" violence. Repeatedly in "Thoughts for the Times," and later in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud asserts that violence and aggression are natural to humanity (and natural to the death drive, which is discussed below). In Freud's mind, evil cannot be eradicated because it represents part

² Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. XIV, On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology, and Other Works, 1914-1916 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 275.

³ Ibid., 280.

of the deepest essence of humanity. Intense love and intense hate coexist in humanity. This idea flows into Freud's second section on war.

Within the section entitled, *Humans' Attitude Toward Death*, Freud notes that death is constant. World War I, with its "perfection" of weaponry, created a way to kill indiscriminately and effectively. Freud insinuates that in the battles of World War I, the "civilized" soldier returned home "joyfully to his wife and children, unchecked and undisturbed by the thoughts of the enemies he has killed."⁴ This myth is confronted in 1920's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. "Unchecked" and "undisturbed" soldiers would not have traumatic dreams and war neuroses. Even if killing and death are part of humans' primordial nature, they still leave an undeniable mark on people. Freud comes close to acknowledging this when he describes the necessity of reintegration practices aimed at atoning for war atrocities for returning "primeval" veterans. Freud speculates that the practices could have been derived from superstitions about the spirits of the dead coming to exact their revenge. These reintegration practices are necessary in that they have historically, and currently, been used as a mechanism to recognize the brutality that a person has exacted on another human being. Whether civilized or primeval, taking another person's life in war (in particular) impacts the soul of the one who has killed.

The Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle

Early in Freud's career he posited that a neurosis played out in an analysand's mind to reduce tension. Tension is "unpleasure," and the mind prefers pleasure. At its simplest, the pleasure principle is about the eradication of tension (i.e., unpleasure). Dream activity is the space in which a person can most live into the pleasure principle. An unconscious wish confronts the mind, and the mind is pressured by the wish's tensions. The tensions are dispersed in the

⁴ Ibid., 295.

dream, which serves as a “hallucination of satisfaction.”⁵ Freud utilized the example of a newborn infant experiencing the “tension” of hunger. Hunger’s tension is satiated when the infant nurses from the mother. The satisfaction is remembered as a memory and at the next tension of hunger, “the infant mind hallucinates the breast.”⁶ The hallucination is pleasurable.

However, the hallucination is not nourishing, and the mind is forced to reckon with reality. It is this reckoning which led Freud to develop the reality principle. The reality principle is similar to the pleasure principle in that the reduction of tension – and the increase of pleasure – is the goal. The major difference is that now the mind takes reality seriously. Freud’s hypothesis of the mind came from his analysis of neurotic clients in psychoanalysis. He noted that neurotic clients “turn away from reality, because they find it unbearable.”⁷

What is important in all of Freud’s hypothesizing for our purposes of this dissertation is how it relates to trauma and the reintegration of trauma into civilian life after war. Not only the physical wounds of war have ravaged returning soldiers, but also the psychological wounds of war have ravaged them. Freud’s dream analysis was no longer sufficient.⁸ Freud learned that the ongoing and ever-present dreams of battle were not similar to a neurotic “turning from reality.” Freud, then, made an essential revision to his theory of dreams. The dreams of the soldiers suffering from traumatic neuroses “have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of the accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. This astonishes people far too little.”⁹

⁵ Jonathan Lear, *Freud* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 148.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁸ Freud described his theory of dreams as “the most trustworthy method of investigating deep mental processes.” Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), 11.

⁹ Ibid.

What astonishes people far too little? The ongoing terrifying trauma of reliving the battlefield experience at home, which is only compounded in that the typical treatment does not seem to eradicate the symptom as the trauma overwhelmingly persists. In order to fully encapsulate this dread, Freud uses the German word *Schreck*, which is not merely fear or anxiety. *Schreck* is more appropriately translated as “dread.” Fear and anxiety are a proactive stance toward danger. Jonathan Lear explains that “anxiety is generalized preparedness; fear is directed toward a specific threatening world object.”¹⁰ *Schreck* is not a feeling that prepares; it is dread of the unexpected. The brain is seemingly (constantly) replicating the reality of the battlefield: danger and surprise. The brain’s ongoing traumatic reenactment cannot be explained in terms of the normal wish-fulfillment of Freud’s dream theory.

Freud posited that the traumatic dreams of war and combat were not normal dreams that applied to wish-fulfillment. The combat dreams were remarkable because the individual repeatedly woke up from the dreams. To fully elucidate this phenomenon, I want to utilize another theme from Freud’s oeuvre that is applicable here: *Nachträglichkeit*, or deferred action. With this theory, Freud explains why an event that is later experienced as traumatic was not traumatic during the initial event. Applied to my example, why are soldiers’ dreams more traumatic than the experienced act of combat? Freud notes that the subject either missed something in the actual experience, or that the subject has grown in such a way that the experience is now understood as traumatic.¹¹

For Phillip, I would add consideration of the cultural apparatus and the military construct as factors as well. With Phillip’s MIE, for example, he worked within a military construction of values, rules, and interpretations. Therefore, the power he displayed on the roads of Afghanistan

¹⁰ Lear, *Freud*, 156.

¹¹ Cathy Caruth, “Introduction: Trauma and Experience,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.

was not violent: the non-combatant entered into the arena of combat. However, when the soldier returns home—away from the military construct—the event is experienced traumatically because the individual is now fully reckoning with injuring a non-combatant. The personal moral code of right and wrong has been violated, not the military's code.

Therefore, returning to the experience that is being developed in the dream, the mind steps in, at some level, to wake the individual up, rupturing the dream. Freud is concerned here with “mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in.”¹² The mind, during a traumatic dream, is attempting to “master” the stimulus retrospectively. A retrospective processing of trauma is not part of the pleasure principle; therefore, these traumatic dreams of war occur:

They are endeavoring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis. They thus afford us a view of a function of the mental apparatus which, though it does not contradict the pleasure principle, is nevertheless independent of it and seems to be more primitive than the purpose of gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure.¹³

The traumatic dream of war is more primitive than the pleasure principle. This argument in support of the primitive nature of humanity is in line with Freud's thinking in his 1915 article on the disillusionment caused by World War I. There is a sense in which Freud posits that “normal” dream functioning is possible again because the brain is consistently working to regain the capability to dream. However, in the meantime, the traumatic dream will continue to wake the soldier up and the process of retrospective mastering will continue.

When Phillip struggles with nightmares that replay the same scenario ad nauseam, night after night, his concern is, why must I continue to relive this horror? Freud insists that the mind is trying to make meaning out of the event, but it continues to rupture the dream and awaken the individual. Lear posits another explanation: the awakening is the brain's own attempt at self-

¹² Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 29-30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

preservation—“the mind avoids anxiety by disrupting its own ability to function.”¹⁴ The retrospective stimulus that Freud posited that the brain sought to master is intentionally overwhelming to the brain in order to disrupt its functioning. Freud takes this insight of retrospective meaning making and moves to his primary claim in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: the death drive.

The Death Drive

Freud approaches the death drive through what he understands as the war neuroses’ “compulsion to repeat.”¹⁵ Therefore, instead of working with the goal of wish-fulfillment, traumatic dreams work within a compulsion to repeat. The compulsion to repeat, however, is far from an obvious development in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. It seems as though Freud could be arguing for one of two developments. First, the brain, during a traumatic dream, is attempting to push through the stimulus of the dream. However, as has been shown, the brain is overwhelmed by the stimulus and the individual wakes up. I have already detailed the analysis of this theory: the soldier awakens because the brain cannot make meaning out of the trauma. Another possible reason for the compulsion to repeat is that the brain sabotages itself before it can confront and process the dream.

The compulsion to repeat is the area in which many secondary sources note that Freud changed his mind, because Freud describes it as an “exception to the proposition that dreams are fulfillments of wishes.”¹⁶ In actuality, Freud is still pretty clear about what is going on in a traumatic dream and how it can still fit within his schema. The traumatic dream is a more

¹⁴ Lear, *Freud*, 160.

¹⁵ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 41.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

“primitive” dream than merely seeking pleasure.¹⁷ The primordial nature of traumatic dreams connects to the death drive.

Humanity’s compulsion to repeat is a drive (or “instinct”) that is “an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things.”¹⁸ Freud’s drive is peculiar, as it drives one backwards, rather than forwards. The mind is attempting to restore a previous mode of operating that existed before the overpowering stimulus. This leads Freud to note his goal for humanity as a return to a primordial state, to “become organic again”; in other words, “The aim of all life is death.”¹⁹

Phillip recounts that he “was ready to die,” and he was “prepared to kill.” His preparation found exegetical clarity through his reading of John 15. Laying down his life for his battle buddies was achieving something holy. Here are two examples. First, on one of his first nights in Afghanistan his base came under mortar attack. The SOP for this entailed that everyone would wake up, don the appropriate kit, and proceed to a designated bunker for accountability. Phillip heard the mortar warning sirens and even heard incoming rounds. He woke up, flew out of bed, and into his gear, and went outside. He ran from bunk to bunk banging on everyone’s doors. They were all asleep still. With his heartbeat racing and having difficulty catching his breath, he realized he was *really* scared. He knew he was trained and ready for this scenario, but the sound of an actual mortar was terrifying. Phillip was ready to die to run to another room to wake up his buddies.

Second, Phillip had to reckon with what it would mean to kill for a battle buddy. His headquarters was positioned near a fence line stationed adjacent to an entry control point (ECP). There were rumors of Taliban insurgents sneaking onto bases to set off IEDs on American bases.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹⁹ Ibid., 45-46.

This heightened security and most soldiers' anxiety during deployment. Phillip now had to reckon with what he would do if someone snuck on base and he caught them. He describes this sensation as:

There is something else all together when you think about killing somebody, though. I was not really completely trained for that. I would think about what I would do if someone crossed the ECP... I don't know if I brought that home... did I? I had to decide if I was ready to kill someone. We were training with a group of ANP [Afghanistan National Police] and they were unloading off a big school bus. This was right after a group of Afghan soldiers shot some American soldiers. I wondered then—and still do—if I would mow them all down. I was *prepared* to. If they got near my guys, I would do it.

Phillip understood that being a Christian meant, like Jesus, he might have to die for others and for his faith.

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Interviews

Claremont School of Theology Informed Consent for Participants Able to Give Legal Consent

Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigator and Purpose of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled “Narratives of Moral Injury and Reintegration: Toward a Critical, Liberative Practical Theology.” The study is being conducted by Joshua Morris under the supervision of Duane Bidwell, Ph.D., of Claremont School of Theology, 1325 N. College Ave; Claremont, CA 91711, DBidwell@cst.edu, 909-447-2528.

The purpose of this research is to examine the role society plays in reintegrating the experience of moral injury back into civilian life. Your participation in the study will contribute to a better understanding of the societal implications of reintegrating Reserve and National Guard veterans living with moral injury. You are free to contact the researcher using the information below to discuss the study.

Joshua.Morris@CST.edu
11009 E. 85th Street
Raytown, MO 64138
(816) 585-5112

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

If you agree to participate:

- Participation will consist of three 60- to 90-minute in-person interviews conducted at three separate times in a six-week period. Ideally, interviews would take place during weeks one, three, and five.
- You may choose to be identified by a pseudonym of your choosing or one assigned by the researcher.
- On your request, you will be able to review the analysis created from our interviews and request corrections, prior to submission of the dissertation’s final draft. Final decisions reside with the researcher.
- Your participation is intended to gauge the experience of reintegrating back into society as a Reserve or National Guard veteran having experienced moral injury.
- You will not be compensated financially.

Risks and Confidentiality of Data

The study involves a few, minimal risks. You could reveal to the researcher sensitive or personally shameful events from your military service. You could experience, or re-experience, painful emotions in remembering these events. The risk is minimal because the interview process protects your privacy and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. There will be no costs for participating. The researcher will keep your name, email address, and other personally identifiable information private during the data collection phase. No personally identifiable information will be publicly released. A limited number of research team members

will have access to the data during data collection. The research team members are: Joshua Morris, M.Div., B.C.C., Duane Bidwell, Ph.D. and Kathleen Greider, Ph.D.

When the results of the research are published, you will not be identified by name; some identifying details will be changed to protect your privacy. Your information will be stored for twenty-four months after the dissertation defense date and then deleted from my personal laptop; paper copies will be shredded.

Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation without penalty. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with the researcher or with Claremont School of Theology in any way. If you do not want to participate, you may simply tell the researcher and stop participating any time prior to the submission of the final dissertation draft.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the study or need to update your contact information contact the researcher Joshua Morris at (816) 585-5112 or send an email to Joshua.Morris@cst.edu. Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study and the study number is 2018-0301.

Questions about your rights as a research participant.

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, my advisor, Duane Bidwell, Ph.D. by phone at (909) 447-2528 or email at DBidwell@cst.edu.

Thank you.

❖ SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Address

Phone

Email

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

Signature of Investigator

Date (same as participant's)

A copy of this document will be supplied for your records.

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